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ROWN HORDE
By RICHARD TOOKER

A STORY OF
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VOL. VI SEPTEMBER, 1944 No. 2

Book-Length Novel

The Day of the Brown Horde — **Richard Tooker** — 8

They ran like hunted animals across their little day in time, driven toward oblivion by merciless Nature. But one there was who saw a dim vision, and knew himself born to carry single-handed the spark of humanity to a waiting future. This is his story.

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Short Story

The Postman of Otford — **Lord Dunsany** — 108

There are some things that human eyes were never meant to see.

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Short Novel

The Novel of the White Powder — **Arthur Machen** — 111

Had young Leicester innocently drunk the unholy sacrament of the ancient Witches' Sabbath? Only one man could have answered that question, and as for him...

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The Readers' Viewpoint — 6

In the Next Issue — 107

Cover by Lawrence, and illustrations by Lawrence, Ronald Clyne and Frank Kramer.

All the stories in this publication are either new or have never appeared in a magazine.

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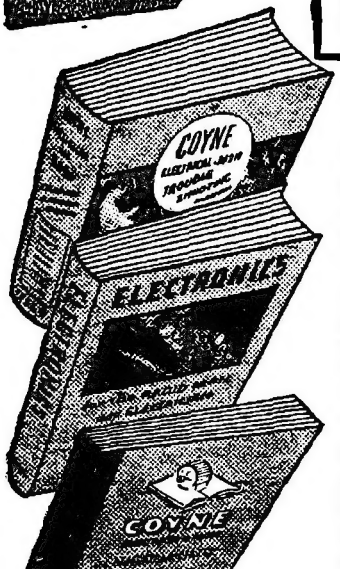

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The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, All-Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York.

FROM THE SERVICE

Dear Editors:

Although this may be a long affair I hope you don't edit it. Rather not print it at all than cut it up. Having been in the newspaper business before induction I know the disappointment of editing.

Due to reasons of your own you are maintaining a quarterly issue. I say that because I believe you could publish F.F.M. oftener.

I can see why you are not publishing magazines reprints (although many of our great classics first appeared there.) For one thing it would be bad business to reprint stories appearing in a magazine now taken over. Then there are legal formalities.

Being comparatively new in S. F. and F. fandom, only eight years, I think my collection is with the best of them. Yet my knowledge of many books is sadly lacking. Many of the titles suggested by readers are unknown to me. Yet I hope to read them all some day.

Though we all grieve the passing of A. Merritt there is nothing we can do. And to the howling fans I can say this; although you may not print his works they can be obtained in lasting pocket book form. Here's where I get shot, hanged, tortured, and otherwise dismembered. But A. Merritt's fame lay in the beauty of his description alone. I think his work was muddling at times.

Before I get thrown in the waste basket I dissect the latest issue:

John Taine's "The Greatest Adventure" is a very good story. I can't say more because I am yet to be sold on Taine. Although in my mind Taine's writing is first class, there is that something lacking. Taine always leaves something to be desired. This story, as with his "Iron Star" was full of useless theories. And never once does he try to explain what he means in plain terms.

Lawrence is a great artist. He is nothing like Finlay or the master of them all, Frank R. Paul, but his drawing of the carcass-littered beach is superb. It truly is a wonderful piece of work. I congratulate him. His illustrations on pages 21-45 are in the same bracket. In "The Greatest Adventure" he is at his best yet.

Not for the world (bad as it is today) would I miss putting in my two cents' worth on the title matter. I, like everyone else, am for a change. Yet I can see where it is good business to use one that is established and well known. As your magazine is of the higher class of literature, the cover should always be refined. *Famous Classics* should be in large type. White with electric blue outline. And *Of Fantasy* should be in a long band of color contrasting with the cover background.

The monster on the June cover does Lawrence great credit. More hand slapping from the gallery.

I hope you *never* give up the policy of printing a novel. For novels alone give us the satisfaction of a quarter well spent. There, the authors did their best work.

While we're talking about classics and everyone wanting someone to produce another, would we know a classic if we saw it? Would it sell?

Both of the answers are, No!

For one thing, the style in today's writing is different, in all kinds of writing. And it is the slow, beautiful, careful, writing of several years ago that people call classics. The style is largely the reason for the cry "Classic" and that kind of writing wouldn't pass the editorial desk today. Think about it.

As my knowledge of the great books is very small, all I can say is this: Please print *no* Burroughs, Wells, Verne, or Haggard. We can all get their work in book form. Please print more Taine (even if I can't get satisfaction), Kline, (O. A., of course) Lovecraft, Derleth, C. A. Smith, G. Edwards, Stockton, Gorman, and above all George Allan England.

From one in a barracks, miles away from his collection and hobby, comes—luck, and lots of it!!

PVT. CHARLES F. DERRY.

FROM RICHARD TOOKER

Celebrating the magazine publication of "The Day of the Brown Horde" is quite an occasion for the author. It deserves saying something original. Since that is impossible in view of everything being well said by letter writers to *Famous Fantastic Mysteries,* I'll just have to be satisfied to throw my light on thinks and things.

I'm past forty and still writing, mostly hack writing on contract, with no time for the study and rewriting which a novel as ambitious as "The Day of the Brown Horde" requires. When I wrote it I was running a milk route on my sister's ranch in North Dakota. I worked like blazes to get through by ten o'clock so I could spend the rest of the day on the book until evening chore time. I was younger then, full of fire and revolutionary ideas. I couldn't do that terrific labor now, although I can do more in a short time than I could then.

"The Day of the Brown Horde" was first published in 1929 by Payson & Clark. It was a literary success in that it was well received by authority, even noticed by Mr. Van de Water. In 1931 a reprint edition appeared.

(Continued on page 120)

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The Day of the

By Richard Tooker

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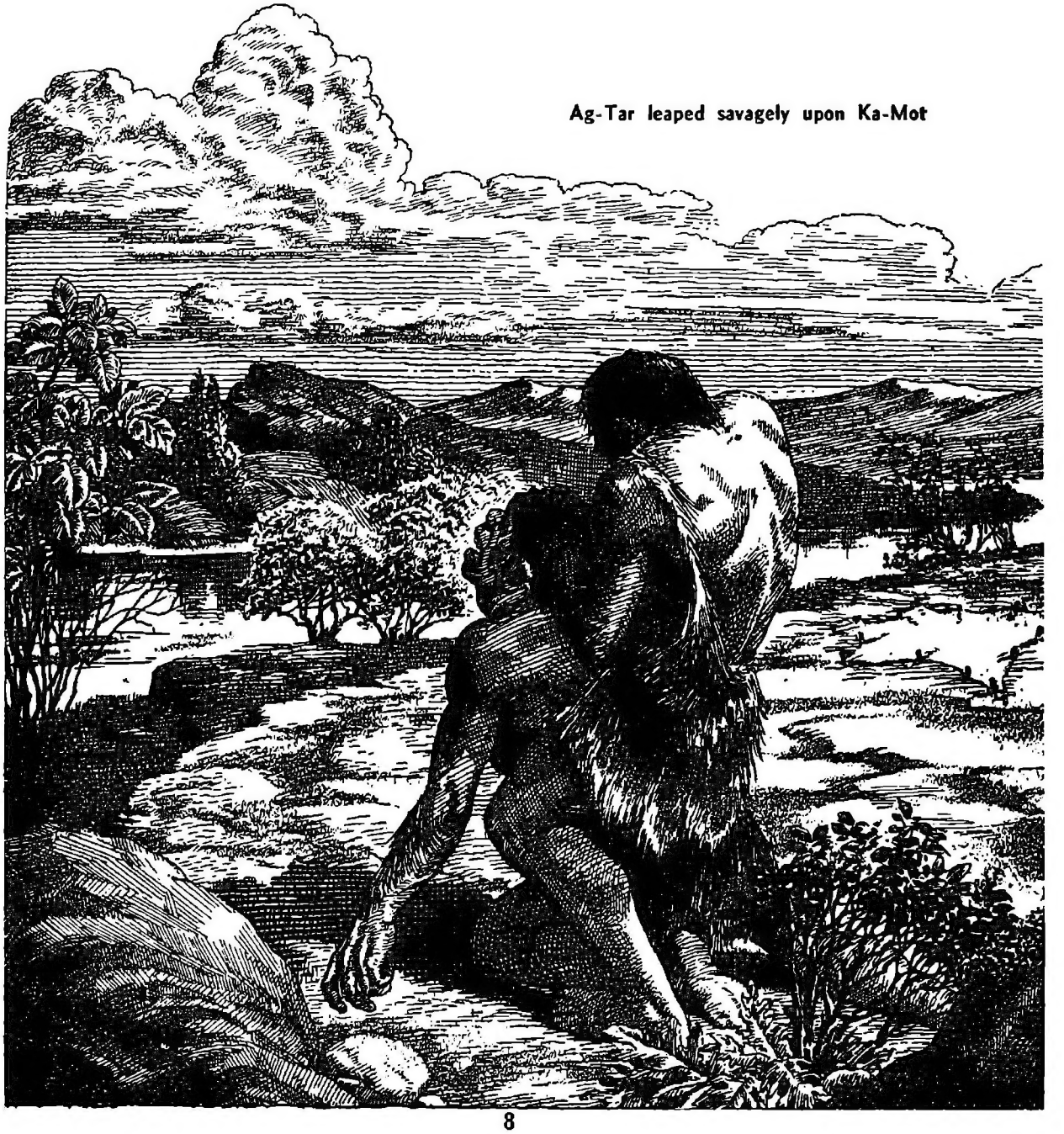

Ag-Tar leaped savagely upon Ka-Mot

Brown Horde

CHAPTER I

THE LAW OF THE FLESH

LOFTY, volcanic plateaus frowned east and west of the torrid lowlands. The heat had formed a veil of mist over the wide river that wound sluggishly along the heart of the valley, and in the south, behind a long arm of the sea, hung a dim blue bank of storm clouds. Far to the

First magazine rights purchased from the author.

north, faintly silhouetted in mauve infinity, the great shoulders of barren uplands marked the head of the basin.

Near the plateau rims the jungle thinned to rolling plains, threaded by tortuous arroyos, dotted by ox-like bison and diminutive desert horses. Here roved the fierce bird beast, the diatryma, seven feet tall, with beak as long as a crocodile's jaws; here, too, was the haunt of the horn-armored glyptodon, giant armadillo of the prehistoric Americas.

Laden with scattered cloud fleece, a sultry sky flung its pellucid arch over all, and across the blue dome flapped in heavy, brooding flight, strange, scaly, web-winged birds. Swarms of insects droned ceaselessly in the steaming swamps. Giant dragon flies soared and idled on the hot damp breezes. Now and again, a monster plesiosaur, last true scion of a reptile age, waddled its awkward way up muddy bank or across broad river shoal. In the denser growths of palm and pinite, elephantine sloths, the megatheres, lurched from tree to tree, voicing deep booming cries as they devoured mass and cluster of club-moss and stooling fungi. It was the prehistoric New World in a valley now the upper portion of the Gulf of California—a land sinister and grim, aloof and arrogant in inviolate virginity, bounded by restless seas and uncertain coastlines, unawakened as yet by the predestined cataclysms that were forever to entomb it in time to come.

Remote was man, and all the attributes of man, from that savage, pristine wilderness; yet man was there. On the rim of a high bank, above a swift stream that twisted its way to the central river, lay a brown, motionless body, hardly distinguishable from boulder or dead log. Directly beneath the figure a game trail wound through the bracken to a pool of quiet backwater. Snails and salamanders explored the figure on the bank, insects alighted to investigate it; even a scaly-feathered bird, not far ascended from reptile form, flapped down and perched on a stone close by, croaking a tuneless song in valiant indifference to whatever danger that inert body might comprise.

AT LENGTH two moose-deer, buck and doe, appeared on the trail, dun, black-marked bodies mottled by lacy shadows from the boughs above. The form on the bank underwent instantaneous change, imperceptible almost, as by an unified tensing of all muscles in preparation for swift action. It moved. It ceased to resemble a log or stone; it became an integral part of the primordial drama, an integral part far more vibrantly alive, both in mind and matter of life, than the snake-eyed bird that abruptly ceased its croaking and flapped ponderously away.

Bulges showed under a coppery skin that was tough as tanned leather. Arms and legs took shape—smooth, gliding members that moved with a silence and swiftness, and effortlessness, almost incredible. Above the trough-like furrow at the termination of the muscle-buried spine lifted a head, round, brachycephalic, slanting of fore and hind, covered by a matted mop of coal-black hair. The right arm slid back noiselessly. In the broad hand was a fragment of basalt as large as a human head.

On came the moose-deer, so far unaware of impending peril. They reached a point directly beneath the form on top of the bank. The stone was poised and hefted for a throw. At last sensing danger, the animals paused. As if the halt had been an awaited signal, the brown arm flashed down; the stone hurtled unerringly to the trail. The buck, which was foremost, went down with a broken neck, and the doe leaped away with dazzling speed, hurdled the stream and vanished in a copse of pale green ferns.

Arising in a movement that seemed the action of one thew, so coördinated was it, the killer was for a brief interval clearly visible against a background of moss-bearded cycads. He was not above five and a half feet tall, bent slightly from squatting, or crouching, the better part of his life. There was a preponderance of back and neck muscles. The arms were long and loosely hung, powerful, yet flexible—throwing arms. They swung from shoulders as large as thighs. A shapeless tunic of dried deerskin hung over one shoulder and about the groin, apparently more for protection than for conventional clothing. His legs were bowed and gnarled from exhaustive periods of trailing and climbing. Save for his scalp, there was little or no hair upon his body. High cheekbones were the outstanding feature of a face immobile in its eagle-like savagery. Eyes deep-set, piercing, furtively alert, darted this way and that under shelving brows. The mouth was loose and wide over large, somewhat protuberant teeth. It was a flesh-eater's mouth.

Following a careful survey of the nearby terrain, as if to ascertain if any jungle beast intended to dispute his possession

of the slain buck, the hunter dropped over the edge of the bank, landing by the side of his kill as lightly as a cat. The nostrils of his blunt nose dilated and contracted alternately and rapidly as he flung the limp body of the buck over one shoulder and set off through the dense vegetation. Swiftly and quietly he proceeded, eying the deepest thickets with overt suspicion, glancing frequently behind in well-founded dread and constant readiness for hostilities or flight.

For upward of an hour the man made his way through the jungle, without halt or mishap, until he reached the bank of the central river. At the point where he stopped a boulder-strewn ridge was discernible across the stream. The face of the ridge was honeycombed by artificial caves, or barrows. A score or more of females, children and half-grown males were scattered over a natural clearing extending between the river and the ridge. A banked fire smouldered in the center of the open space. Lying about on barren patches of ground were crude implements of unpolished stone, but no crockery of any kind was in evidence. Several green hides were pegged out on the ground, drying in the afternoon sun, and two females bent over a raw pelt, hacking and scraping away the surplus tissues with chips of flint. At one side of the clearing were several heaps of bones, shells, ashes and other refuse—kitchen-middens of a primeval domicile. Almost midway along the barrowridge was a spring of water, glittering in the sun as it poured into a shallow excavation. This was drinking water for the tribe. The river was undrinkable because of saline springs and backwater from the sea.

THE hunter gave the scene a brief scrutiny, then splashed into the river and waded across the wide shallows. In the clearing he stopped at the banked fire and flung the buck from his shoulders. The approach of a woman with an infant in the hollow of one arm attracted his attention. He made a sign across his forehead with one hand, at which the woman placed her left hand on top of her head, palm down. She held it there briefly, inclining her head as if in obeisance. Then the man spoke, a series of monosyllables or gutturals, accompanied by many gestures of hands, head and body. It was a language devoid of structure, one of sounds associated with pictures and symbols, the voice being an aid to the gestures, rather than the gestures to the voice.

"Peace, O-Wa," he conveyed. "Ka-Mot, the mate of you, brings the deer first of all the hunters. Swifter than Ag-Tar, the Old Man, is Ka-Mot, mate of O-Wa."

"Peace," was the woman's reply, made by opening the hand forward. She showed signs of great physical endurance in her full breast and muscular arms and legs. Because of unusual breadth, she appeared short in stature, and save for plumpness, and a narrowness of shoulders by comparison, she might easily have been mistaken for a male. An abundance of straight, black hair, coarse, yet finer than the man's, flowed down her back and on either side of her broad, full face, which now was lighted with emotions akin to pleasure or relief. The child, somewhat pale and emaciated, was wailing fretfully. The man looked down at it, while the mother tightened her embrace in a protective manner.

There was something that resembled both fear and love in her contemplation of the child, but the father seemed only displeased. He sighed and spoke.

"Has the man-child walked and eaten meat? This is the last of the naming days. If the man-child of Ka-Mot and O-Wa does not walk and eat the flesh of Ya-Ya, the deer, the Old Man will slay it. That is the law."

"Kaa, the Unnamed, cannot walk," the woman replied dejectedly. "Kaa can not eat the flesh of Ya-Ya. When Ag-Tar, the Old Man, returns from the hunt, Kaa must die. It is the law. It is a bad law." She hugged the infant with a sudden rapacious violence, and her lips lifted in a snarl of hatred for him who would take her child from her.

A low growl issued from the throat of the male. His deep-set eyes glittered with the reflection of a rising emotion, as of a long-smouldering fire bursting into flame. Lips writhed back from yellow teeth. He drew himself up to his full height, and beat upon his chest, which he puffed out to barrel-like dimensions. Signs flew from fingers, arms and head, together with the harsh consonants of his mouth:

"The man-child of Ka-Mot and O-Wa shall not die!" he declared. "No longer is Ag-Tar strongest of the tribe. Ka-Mot is strongest. Ka-Mot shall slay Ag-Tar when he returns from the hunt. Ka-Mot shall rule the people. Kaa, the Unnamed, shall not die. Peace, O-Wa—peace, all the people of Ag-Tar, who shall be the people of Ka-Mot."

The woman retreated from her boasting mate, stark fear in her eyes. It was a fear age-old, founded in traditions which dated back to the Old World, before the migration of her forebears. Defiance of Ag-Tar, the Old Man, king of the tribe, meant certain death, unless the defier proved the stronger.

The other women and children, who had overheard the boast of the male, seemed as frightened as O-Wa. Several growled restively; others set up a plaintive wailing, all of which was emotion ungoverned, since none knew aught of repression, save as danger might require repression or self-control.

"Ag-Tar is strong as Bo-Ma, the mastodon," O-Wa timorously remonstrated.

"I am stronger," rumbled Ka-Mot. "Long I have waited. Now I am strongest of all the hunters. I will kill Ag-Tar, the Old Man. When he comes from the forest with the hunters, then I shall kill him. New laws shall be made for the tribe. No longer will the sickly perish. No longer will the meat be divided at the eating time. What belongs to the hunter shall remain his own and of his mate and his children. When Ka-Mot is Old Man of the tribe, this shall be."

ON AND on Ka-Mot orated, boasting and promising, working himself into a ferocious frenzy. His sinewy arms flexed and knotted as he gripped his hamlike hands together in a pantomime of strangling. Swiftly, with great vehemence, he enacted a mimic battle with his anticipated opponent. The dust rose under his pounding feet; his veins swelled. The lust to kill was epitomized in every grimace, every violent contortion. In conclusion he made the motion of casting down a broken, lifeless body. Then, voicing harsh, coughing grunts, he began a pompous strut about the clearing, lashing his rage to white-heat in preparation for the coming struggle. Long he had nursed ambition, and at last he had ripe opportunity and exonerating motive.

The mate of the mad male turned from him and hurried to one of the barrows on the ridge, wherein she disappeared. Numerous others did likewise in their respective barrows, especially among the females. Those remaining in the clearing made certain Ka-Mot had wide berth in which to parade his forecasted kingship, for well they knew that to cross the path of blood-mad hunter was courting death. The life of hunter, child or female was but the whetting of teeth to him who strutted his war-dance on the eve of mortal battle.

In the entrance of the barrow where she had dwelt since Ag-Tar, the Old Man, had sanctioned her mating with Ka-Mot, O-Wa sat down upon a dried bison skin, her first-born in her arms. There were naught but a few broken stone implements, bones and old skins furnishing the subterranean nest; it was only a shale-walled hole leading to an enlarged sleeping chamber, yet for O-Wa it had signified perfect felicity. And now Ka-Mot's madness prophesied rude destruction of her happiness. With eyes sad and fearful she followed the tantrums of Ka-Mot in the clearing below. She had no mistaken notions concerning her mate's ambitions. All her life Ag-Tar had held his place at the head of the tribe by force of tooth and fist. O-Wa had known but three hunters openly to covet the kingship, and each of the three had fallen before the mighty thews and cunning battlecraft of the Old Man.

Now Ka-Mot would try. Ka-Mot was strong; no hunter was stronger than he, yet O-Wa doubted his prowess in a match with the redoubtable Ag-Tar, grizzled veteran of a score of death-duels. She trembled as memory pictures thronged. Again she saw the invincible Old Man, hoary giant of the tribe, dashing to death the aging females and the subnormal children, breaking the bones of the defiant, or disobedient, with bare hands or with heavy club.

Her muscles were tensed with dread expectancy as she caught sight of two hunters debouching from the jungle. Then she relaxed in great relief upon seeing that neither was Ag-Tar. Yet she could not control the involuntary quivering of her flesh. The drowsing infant was aroused. He began to cry and struggle, whereupon she placed a calloused hand over his mouth. Only too soon would the Old Man pass the death sentence upon the brown baby. That hour of judgment should not be hastened by noisy complaining. She crooned a low, tuneless chant as she quieted the babe. Softly rising and falling, the mother's lullaby filled the gloomy vault of the earthhouse with unearthly sweetness. Love was in that song, love such as the purring panther mother knows for her cubs. And there was something else in that song which the beast could never know.

First of her instinctive hopes for a long line of rugged children by Ka-Mot, whose

only mate was she, Kaa had come into the world blighted by some strange obstruction to normal development. But the subnormality of her first-born had not lessened her love for it; rather that love was deepened by impending doom of tribal law. She would have fought to the death any beast attacking the brown baby, or any male attempting to harm him she would have faced with bared teeth and clawing fingers; but the idea of defying Ag-Tar, the Old Man, turned her blood to water. For hundreds of years Old Man had ruled her people with fetish and brute force, with laws made out of the mere struggle for existence; and before those vicious tyrants even mother-love and the courage of mother-love quailed in servile obeisance.

HER chanted lullaby continued, accompanied by the swaying from side to side of her body in a sort of cadence. Hunter after hunter came into the clearing while she watched, each depositing game of some kind near the central fire. With every appearance of a male coming through the trees or wading across the river shallows, O-Wa's heart leaped and beat painfully until she was assured it was not the Old Man. Ka-Mot had quieted down now. He was squatting among several other hunters, sullen and silent, aloof from the desultory gutturals of the conversation going on about him.

Then O-Wa's chant was sharply cut off in a high-pitched, quickly stifled cry of terror and despair. The dreaded hour was at hand. Ag-Tar, the Old Man, had returned from the hunt.

Emerging from the fringe of trees south of the clearing were half a dozen hunters, all save their leader bearing a burden of wild game. Four had quarters of bison, and the other two a species of woolly antelope. The leader stalked with a belligerent mien that befitted the august personage of the Old Man of the tribe.

His hair was almost white and stood out from his time-seared features in a stiff, bushy halo. His muscles were knotted like the trunk of an ancient oak. Age seemed to have strengthened rather than weakened him. In one hand he swung a wooden, knot-headed club as large around as one of his legs, swung it as easily as he would have swung a willow switch. His body was covered with scars where the talons of sabre-tooths, the teeth of saurians and the horns of bison had left their marks. The record of those battles with the wild was the record of Ag-Tar's rise to supreme strength and unequalled cunning.

He had grown wise in the ways of the primitive, proof of which was the fact that he was by many years the oldest male of the tribe in an age when men died young. Not yet had Ag-Tar known a man to live until his teeth began to fall out. Only women were executed for that certain sign of age and uselessness. The claws of beasts, sickness and accident took early toll of the males when the struggle of the race for existence was at best unequal. But Ag-Tar had endured, and there was a haughty confidence in his carriage which bespoke his intention of enduring indefinitely.

WHILE O-Wa watched, like a hare charmed by a snake, Ag-Tar's group stopped at the central fire and unloaded their meat. Ka-Mot made no hostile move. He seemed to be waiting for a more opportune moment to reveal his ambitions and bring on the death-duel that must necessarily follow.

From where he stood towering above the other hunters at the central fire, the Old Man raised one hand, opening and shutting it twice. It was the sign to eat, and it brought the tribe rushing for favorable positions near the central fire—all save the hunters not yet returned from the hunt. It was a tribal law, originating in ages past, during scarcity of game, that no hunter could join the tribe at the hour of eating until he had made his daily kill. In Ag-Tar's time, with game so plentiful, few ever failed, save those who never returned for a more tragic reason.

Following the sign to eat, Ag-Tar made another gesture, accompanied by a grunted guttural, whereupon several hunters attacked the pile of game with saw-edged stones, which were chipped and broken into crude semblances of knives. They hacked and tore the skin away from the flesh, slashing and sawing the carcasses limb from limb, like so many hungry dogs. Women and children pressed as closely as they dared, some with mouths dripping, others, who had browsed on roots and berries during the day, evincing some indifference, though all eyes had that haunting hunger which possesses the eater of raw flesh when anticipating a gorge.

The volunteer carvers soon completed their task and slunk back upon their haunches awaiting the signal for apportioning the meat to the tribe. But the Old Man appeared in no hurry to satisfy the

appetites of his hungry subjects, having himself already gorged to satiation by special privilege. Instead, he raised both hands, palms down, in the sign of attention. Instantly all were silent, five score dark eyes bent intently upon the fierce countenance of the old tyrant, among them the burning orbs of Ka-Mot, nursing his grudge until the psychological moment for deadly action.

The Old Man surveyed the assembly with savage hauteur and calculated severity, eyes travelling from this face to that. He seemed unable to find one whose absence greatly displeased him. At last his eyes fell and remained upon the sullen, defiant face of Ka-Mot, who returned the stare with unwavering insolence.

"The mate of Ka-Mot is not at the central fire," signed Ag-Tar rapidly, barking an authoritative expletive.

'The mate of Ka-Mot does not hunger," signed Ka-Mot. "In the barrow she may sleep and knows not the eating time has come."

With a suspicious glare Ag-Tar searched his subject's eyes, then he drew a deep breath and emitted a cry not unlike the roar of a lion. It was the last-call for assembly, and he or she who failed to answer it might expect a broken neck for their heedlessness. Women and children shrank back and hid their faces from the wrath of the king; even the strongest hunters, with the exception of Ka-Mot, cowered down with heads sinking into their broad shoulders as if they expected a blow. O-Wa had had a dim hope that she and Kaa would be overlooked, but Ag-Tar's call appraised her in a terrible manner that she could expect neither largess nor procrastination of justice. Yet, on the impulse of the moment, she left Kaa lying on the skin couch and ran empty armed down to the central fire. Picking her way through the crowded tribesmen, face expressing abject fear and servility, she at length reached the small unoccupied space between Ag-Tar and the pile of meat. Here she fell upon her knees, the flat of her hand upon her head.

The Old Man raised a hand to punish her for tardiness, then seemed to think better of it. "Where is the man-child that has not been named?" he growled.

"He sleeps," she quavered.

"Bring the man-child to the central fire," ordered Ag-Tar. "Let the people see that he eats meat and walks alone."

"Father of all the hunters, Kaa has eaten many berries. Kaa's belly is too full for meat. Kaa is tired and will not walk strongly," she pleaded.

"Bring the child," repeated Ag-Tar, making more forceful his order by striking the woman such a blow on the side of the head that she was stretched prostrate and stunned.

Recovering her senses, O-Wa tottered to her feet and set out for the barrow. She returned quickly enough with Kaa in her arms. Her face now showed stoical resignation, yet her eyes darted this way and that, as if in this last moment she sought some means of preventing the execution of her child.

THE Old Man looked down at the baby, which was held up for his inspection.

"It is a weak child," he signed, addressing the tribe. "Know the law of the tribe that no man-child of six moons, who eats no meat, nor walks upon his own legs, can live." With which announcement he bent and selected a morsel of moose-deer's haunch from the heap before him. This he presented to O-Wa with the stern injunction. "Feed the child meat that the people may see that the law is obeyed."

"Father of all the hunters, he is filled with milk. The meat will make his belly come into his mouth!" signed O-Wa desperately.

Ag-Tar raised a ponderous fist. "The child must eat!" he roared.

With shaking hand the mother forced a morsel of venison into Kaa's tiny mouth. But the child spat it out, writhed its head away and began loudly to wail. Again O-Wa forced the meat between the repelling jaws, and this time the baby vomited. A third time, frantically, O-Wa forced the meat between her baby's lips. But such a struggle he set up, his skinny arms and legs began such a flaying and scratching, together with his choking screams, that it was of no use to continue the farce.

"The son of Ka-Mot and O-Wa is a sick child," signed Ag-Tar. "At six moons it vomits the meat of Ya-Ya." He glared around at the immobile faces of the tribe as if for confirmation of what he said.

"Ai-ee, ai-ee," answered a desultory chorus.

"Father of all the hunters," begged O-Wa, "the man-child is very wise. He will not need to be strong and swift for the hunt."

"The man-child of six moons can not be wise," scoffed the Old Man. "Before the people eat the unnamed child must walk upon his own legs."

"A scorpion bit him upon the foot," lied O-Wa. "He cannot walk from the hurt."

"Let the people see the wound of the scorpion," signed Ag-Tar, impatiently.

O-Wa quickly turned up the right foot of the child where there was a slight contusion behind the toes caused by a sharp stone on the floor of the barrow. The Old Man merely glanced at the wound, then he cuffed O-Wa on the cheek, snarling: "It is the bite of a stone. Make the child walk that the people may see."

Unable to improvise further evasions, O-Wa placed her child upon its spindling legs, coaxing by voice and sign. The infant stood uncertainly erect for a brief time, then fell and was unable to rise without aid. O-Wa hastily lifted him, and once more tried to make him walk. Kaa made a notable effort, but wobbled and fell again, renewing his outcries, wholly innocent of the impending death sentence.

"Ut! Ut!" the Old Man barked the order to stop the test, having lost all patience with O-Wa and her unfit first-born. He addressed the tribe more formally.

"The first-born of Ka-Mot and O-Wa can not walk upon his own legs. He can not eat the flesh of Ya-Ya. The sick child makes the bad hunter. The sick child can not go the long way when Ya-Ya moves his feeding ground."

"Ai-ee, ai-ee," called the hungriest of the tribe, impatient to fill their stomachs. But a number of the women clasped their hands over their heads and began rocking back and forth in a doleful expression of how they regarded the law of death to the unfit.

Without further parley, the Old Man seized the child and tore it out of O-Wa's arms. High over his head he lifted the shrieking infant, preliminary to dashing it upon the ground. But the brutal act never was completed. A tawny streak shot up from the circle of hunters as Ka-Mot interceded. The young male's great hands clutched the Old Man's arms, wrenched them twice, and Kaa, the Unnamed, dropped to the ground, where his vigorous squalling proved he had sustained no serious injury.

CHAPTER II

THE FLIGHT

TAKEN completely by surprise, Ag-Tar reeled back from the onslaught of Ka-Mot, jerking free from the gripping hands. A series of rapidly enunciated barks or snarls issued from the Old Man's lips, which were drawn away from the stained teeth in a wolfish grimace. Then, while the Old Man gathered his wits from the momentary paralysis of stark amazement, O-Wa darted between the two, snatched up her child and hurried away to the outer edge of the excited crowd. She turned in time to see the Old Man attack.

With a roar of rage that struck fear to the hearts of even the doughtiest hunters, Ag-Tar lunged upon the challenger, striking, clawing, gnashing his teeth. There was no thought of weapon other than fist and tooth. In the heat of rage the males ever battled each other with the armaments that had been endowed them by Nature.

Ka-Mot, more active if not wholly as strong as Ag-Tar, parried the ferocious assault, leaped away and commenced trotting sidewise in a small circle, the Old Man wheeling so that he continually faced his adversary. In the throat of each bubbled a ceaseless snarling and growling, oaths they could not otherwise utter. Only a few seconds Ka-Mot was allowed to continue his sidling dance. Then Ag-Tar leaped in again, clawing hands seeking for the brown throat. With lowered head Ka-Mot met the charge, like a buck moose-deer, striking a stunning blow to the chin with the frontal bone of the skull.

However, the Old Man seemed scarcely to notice the shock, as in a feint exceedingly swift for so large a man, he closed his tree-like arms around Ka-Mot, locking them with hands clenched over the small of the back.

In this position the two strained to a motionless deadlock.

The mournful wailing of the females was audible above the hoarse breathing of the combatants, and occasionally a sharp exclamation broke from one of the hunters.

Slowly Ka-Mot was drawn inward by the vise-hold secured by Ag-Tar. It was the Old Man's favorite way of killing, prized for the very quality of ruggedness its execution required. Almost invariably it presaged the speedy weakening of his opponent and the resultant crack of a fractured spine.

Both breathed heavily under the terrific strain, but not from physical exertion. Uncontrolled emotions of rage and ferocity combined to cause the loud breathing. Now and again, with jerking lurch of taut,

quivering bodies, they shifted the position of their feet, searching for a greater leverage.

By degrees, with obstinate persistence, Ag-Tar shifted his grip, ever nearing the point of least resistance, the vertebra just above the small of the back. Straining against the advantageous shifting, Ka-Mot held his bridge-like position with every bone and tendon at a cracking tension. Once he weakened he would instantly break downward like an overstrained bow, and with his groin on the turf the Old Man would double him backward, shoulder under chin, until the lumbar hinge gave way.

On the outer edge of the growling, wailing tribe, O-Wa hovered with her manchild. The fierce gleaming of her eyes was like the light in the eyes of a trapped grizzly. Her teeth were bared in sympathetic ferocity as she expressed passionate devotion to Ka-Mot's cause. But, much as she desired her mate to win, she had strong doubts as to the favorableness of the outcome. Already a desperate alternative struggled up from the depths of age-old inhibitions.

THE slow-working brain of Ka-Mot at last devised a method of breaking Ag-Tar's crushing hold. With teeth within six inches of the Old Man's corded throat, his forehead buried in the hollow above the collarbone, Ka-Mot opened his mouth, shifted his head a trifle, and buried his incisors in the lower part of Ag-Tar's neck. Bellowing with pain, the Old Man lost his hold and staggered backward. Ka-Mot was carried off his feet as he hung by his teeth, but Ag-Tar's flesh gave way before the violent strain, and Ka-Mot rolled to the ground, like a rat flung from the teeth of a terrier. But his teeth had left a ragged rent under Ag-Tar's neck, and the Old Man's breast and tunic were dyed by the ensuing rush of blood.

Ka-Mot's advantage was only momentary, if it existed at all. Unmindful of the deep wound, Ag-Tar leaped on Ka-Mot's back before the challenger could get to his feet. Locking his hands over Ka-Mot's head across the brow, he heaved backward, legs scissored on the abdomen. Now Ka-Mot roared with pain at the sudden strain upon his neck, and the breath escaped his lungs in a hoarse hiss.

Seeing the tide of battle turn once more against her mate, O-Wa retreated quietly with Kaa, and, unseen by anyone, climbed the ridge where the barrows were located. Here, high above the clearing, she crouched in a thicket of fern, panting not so much from the emotion aroused by the battle as from the nerve-racking effects of a plan she had decided to carry into execution if Ka-Mot was defeated. Dimly there throbbed in her that elemental offshoot of reason known as hope, and she tarried to make certain that by some freak of chance Ka-Mot did not again, and decisively, turn the tables on Ag-Tar.

Farther and farther back the challenger's head was strained by the implacable giant above him. The cords of Ka-Mot's neck stood out like ropes, the veins swelling as if they would burst, his face blackening, while, with teeth bared in a fiendish grimace, Ag-Tar hauled back with might and main, blood-smeared torso expanded to herculean proportions by the contracting of the muscle walls of the abdomen. The Old Man's cruel little eyes flamed red. In spasmodic whistles and snorts he expelled his breath.

The end came quickly. As Ka-Mot's neck passed the point where the muscles could resist the terrific strain, Ag-Tar snapped the head over to one side with a sharp twist. There sounded a dull snap of sundered vertebra, and Ag-Tar bounded up alone. Quivering and limp upon his face Ka-Mot lay for an instant, then rolled over and expired upon his back, head twisted grotesquely so that only a mass of hair was visible where his face should have been.

To the cowering tribe the victor in the death-duel signalled attention. Save for the wound in his neck he seemed little the worse for the encounter.

"Peace!" The Old Man addressed the tribe. "Ag-Tar rules. He who challenged the strength of Ag-Tar is dead. None can live who defy Ag-Tar, the Old Man." He paused, vehement, pompous in victorious pose, great, bushy head thrown back, bared teeth and clenched hands threatening the dogged faces of the tribe, as if in this moment of new triumph he would impress upon any other coveter of the kingship the futility of such aspirations.

"The law of Ag-Tar must be obeyed," he resumed. "The man-child of O-Wa and the dead Ka-Mot must die." He lifted his voice in a booming bellow: "O-Wa, bring the child!"

Only the rustle of underbrush on the brow of the barrow-ridge, inaudible in the clearing, answered the command. Mother-love had conquered fear in the savage

heart of O-Wa. She had fled into the jungle with the condemned man-child.

The Old Man's roar of wrath filled the whole clearing when he suspected the cause of O-Wa's nonappearance. Immediately he signed for hunters to search the barrows. They were quick to do the bidding of one who so recently had demonstrated the fury of his punishments. Soon the tribesmen were running in and out of the barrows, looking behind boulders and crashing around in the brush adjacent the clearing. It did not take them long to discover that O-Wa had vanished with her young. Half-blind with rage at this unexpected affront, Ag-Tar thundered further directions to his hunters:

"Find the trail of O-Wa. Death to O-Wa and the sick child!"

"Ai-ee, ai-ee," chorused the hunters. "Death to O-Wa and the child of O-Wa! Death to the defier of Ag-Tar!"

Quickly selecting five males from the numerous volunteers, Ag-Tar led them to the edge of the clearing, barking directions as to procedure in the search for the fugitive's trail. Soon the human bloodhounds were hot on the scent, snooping half-bent around the clearing with an intensity of concentration implying years of training.

THE fleeing mother was about a hundred stone throws from the barrows when the hunters began the search for signs of her disappearance. She was twice that far on her unguided flight before her trail was located where it led away from the summit of the barrow-ridge and across the river shallows to the east bank. Running with every muscle strained to its utmost, she tore through thickets and dashed along winding game-trails that offered freer passage. Between deep breaths she moaned her anguish of fear.

She well knew what was in store for her if Ag-Tar overtook her. Now, not only Kaa, her first-born, would meet violent death at the hands of the tyrant, but she, herself, might expect no commiseration after attempting to escape the Old Man's justice. She must fly until her legs gave way beneath her, or until she met another fate, almost as terrible as that from which she fled, in the jaws of ferocious jungle beasts. Yet there was incertitude in the threat of the jungle, a chance to win through with her deep knowledge

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of the wild. Concerning her fate in Ag-Tar's clutches there was no incertitude.

Through copse of fern and curtain of trailing fungi O-Wa hurled herself, heedless of hurt, shielding her child with strong forearms as best she could, sometimes lowering her head until her heavy hair almost covered the body of the infant. Piggish, mouse-whiskered peccaries, warted hogs and chattering lemurs scattered or fled as the panting woman crashed along. A giant ground sloth, or megathere, feeding on the top of a sapling by bending down the trunk, gave a hoarse grunt as O-Wa inadvertently leaped too near. The gnashing teeth of the megathere added speed to O-Wa's already flying legs. Though the sloth was not a flesh-eating beast, he was quick to resent disturbance from a weaker animal, and the merest flirt of his mighty, hook-clawed forepaw meant death or mayhem.

Following the winding course of the salt river, O-Wa kept up her furious pace, perceiving vividly that her only hope of escape lay in her endurance and speed of limb. There was no possibility of her hiding from Ag-Tar, for he would certainly scent her out. However, she was aware that whoever pursued her must travel comparatively slow because of the necessity of watching her spoor, therefore she foresaw but little danger until her pursuers sighted her. Later, darkness would offer security from Ag-Tar, though darkness would immeasurably increase the perils of the jungle. The fear-torn mind of the fugitive conjured all sorts of awful visions of what awaited her when night made each shadow alive with shining eyes and bark-sharpened claws.

BREATHING steadily in spite of her long run, O-Wa skirted an open vale and leaped the narrow banks of a streamlet emptying into the river. She was beginning to notice the weight of Kaa, slight as it was. Two hours of steady running, with the added strain of being unable to balance oneself with outflung arms, makes the most insignificant weight seem painfully heavy. Yet O-Wa did not for a moment consider leaving Kaa behind. She had dared death for her child as she had known no woman to dare death before her. Something for generations buried in her sex, and for generations uplifting itself in fetish-ruled forebears, had burst into existence in the mate of Ka-Mot, a resistless power, stronger than fear of death or torture. Before the force of that deep-rooted instinct the barriers of law and tradition had crumpled. Her child must live as it was meant to live.

An emerald wall of vine-tangled ferns, nearly thirty feet high, brought O-Wa's headlong flight to an abrupt stop, and for minutes she buffeted futilely at the network of fronds, tendrils, and stems. A green-mottled snake, with rudimentary legs, part of its ten-foot length wound around a coarse frond, opened its pink-lined mouth as if to laugh at the frantic struggles of the human-creature. The threatening flicker of the reptile's tongue drove O-Wa back from the barrier. She paused irresolute, thighs quivering, sloe eyes darting furtively. To her right, eastward, the way was open as it previously had been; to her left was the river, stealing sluggishly through reeds and algæ, its surface covered by a foamy green scum, broken here and there by pinkish plant pads or long-snouted heads of reptile fauna. Her flesh crawled as she contemplated entering the river at that unfrequented place, yet she recalled the guttural narrative of a hunter, how he had hidden his trail from hungry giant wolves by walking in the middle of a shallow stream.

Inspired by the idea of puzzling and delaying the Old Man, O-Wa pushed through the tangled vegetation to the water's edge. Steeling herself to test the depth with one leg, she hesitated, nostrils dilating rapidly, as if by olfactory senses alone she could probe the slime. Then, as she bent there tensely, the surface suddenly swirled, swelled and broke over a dark, mucky back. A horny, turtleish head rose out of the water on a long, arched neck. Behind the massive, duck-shaped body a blunt tail, large as a man's body, oscillated with such force as to form small whirlpools. It was a plesiosaur from the sea up to hatch its young in the quiet waters of the salt river.

High above the water the long jaws of the water-beast opened, revealing a glittering series of sharp saw-teeth. O-Wa leaped back and ran the way she had come. The idea of hiding her trail in the river vanished with one glimpse of that titanic denizen of the deep. The teeth and claws of the forest fauna were vastly preferable to the jaws of the water-beast with its added horror of intangibility—shadowy grottoes under water where half-drowned prey was towed among the masses of wriggling ooze-born life.

As O-Wa ran back along the impene-

trable thicket of giant ferns she heard the faraway call of a hunter. The despairing thought that Ag-Tar was so near that his voice could be heard aroused her to frantic haste in an effort to make up for the time lost at the river's edge, and she fled eastward as in an attempt to outdistance her shadow.

WHEN the sun set she was still running. Twilight stole with imperceptible gradation over the wild valley. Above the leaf-embroidered skyline, across the western horizon, stretched bands of crimson, saffron and violet. The distant trumpeting of a mastodon vainly wrestled with the silence, then all was inexplicably hushed as if in profund litany.

The plaintive wailing of Kaa, famished and fatigued beyond the powers of infant patience, tugged at O-Wa's heart, but she did not stop. There was no time to nurse her child while the twilight speeded the way of her pursuers. She must push on with what remained of her strength. Only after dark could she risk snatching a few minutes of rest while she fed her babe.

Penetrating the jungle farther and farther from the river, still unable to find a passable break in the fern barrier, O-Wa began vaguely considering where she might find a possibly permanent refuge from the wrath of Ag-Tar. She had a dim remembrance, extending from her childhood, of the east rim of the valley. The tribe had skirted it in one of its migrations to fresh hunting grounds. She recalled that the jungle thinned out as the land rose higher from the river, and that a great plain began, rolling eastward for many miles until it came to an abrupt end at the foot of a series of cliffs. In these cliffs even a lone woman, burdened with an infant, might hide herself so well that a thousand hunters could not find her.

Once she saw the probability of an impenetrable refuge in the valley rim she instantly discarded her desire to continue her flight northward. If her strength held out she could make the plains by morning, and from then on, having maintained her lead, she could spend the last of her vitality in a marathon to the safety of the cliffs.

Hope flamed high as dusk deepened and still no triumphant bellow on the backtrail apprised her of the dread certainty that she had been sighted. In one of less acute senses there might have existed a doubt as to whether she really was followed. But, even if she had felt uncertain about hearing the cry of a hunter, she still would have been positive that Ag-Tar and his men trotted somewhere in the rear. She had broken the law, and she could expect no favors from the maker of the law. Instinct told her of a grim reality that needed no verification of the physical eye.

It had grown so dark that progress was maintained with great difficulty before O-Wa felt herself safe enough to make a halt. Turning into a dense thicket of catkin, she crouched with ears attuned to catch the slightest sound that would warn her of the approach of males. She doubted that even the sharpest eyes could find her trail by starlight, yet she did not make the mistake of being over-confident. While feeding the child she relaxed to gain as much benefit as possible from the brief rest. Sitting there in the darkness, velvety eyes wide and restless, starting at every rustle of underbrush or thump of padded feet, she might easily have been mistaken for some lurking ape-beast. This ability to assume all the superficialities of the wild was both innate and consciously developed. More times than once she had saved herself from impending death by a deceptive impersonation of a gibbering monkey, and as such, eligible to the unwritten privileges of the universal brotherhood of the beast-world.

UPON satisfying his hunger, Kaa immediately fell asleep. The child was completely exhausted by the violent handling received since the death of its father. O-Wa lingered a little longer into the shadows, whispering gutturals of endearment into the ears of the slumbering child, then she arose and stole out of the thicket, hastening eastward once more, another shadow among the countless shadows of the jungle. She did not travel as fast as she had in the afternoon, and frequently she paused to listen. Once she was required to make a wide detour in order to avoid two long-tusked mastodons whose vast bulks she had sighted ahead. The pachyderms doubtless sensed the proximity of O-Wa, yet they made no attempt to investigate, being wholly absorbed in tearing down a thicket of succulent saplings.

With the coming of night a dank, miasmic vapor, clammy to the skin, stole through the jungle from bogs near the river. In some places this vapor was of such density that it was distinctly visible

in the starlight. In nebulous wraiths of fantastic form it floated along on a breeze so light as to be scarcely perceptible. Above the wisps of cloudy white loomed the whorls and masses of conifers and palm-like cycad, black and wet with the dews of night, studded by the spasmodic gleaming of countless glow-worms. None but a savage could have passed through that gloomy, primordial fastness without suffering paralysis of fear. Even O-Wa, inspired in her mad flight by mother-love and fear of pursuing death, was aware of the myriad claws of the ever-hostile wild, reaching, always reaching out to drag her down. Yet so keen were her senses that she knew with exactitude the distance from her that giant carnivora passed, or paused to sniff the man-smell.

Besides, with such an abundance of juicier flesh than human, O-Wa comprehended that she stood an excellent chance of escaping the prowling meat-eaters, unless she blundered too close to one. Far more reason had she to fear the beast in the skin of man that hung upon her trail —Ag-Tar, the mighty Old Man, who thirsted for her blood as ever he thirsted for the blood of rebels, and all who disobeyed the injunctions of his crafty mind. Tomorrow would bring the climax of the grim chase—tomorrow, if her strength held out, and she still was free, she could reach the plains on the last lap of her flight to refuge in the wild crags forming the east rim.

DAWN found O-Wa still pushing on, gaunt, weary, sunken-eyed. Ordinarily she greeted the coming of day with great pleasure, but not this morning. Sunlight meant that Ag-Tar could see her trail more plainly, therefore travel faster. And she had covered but half the distance to the cliffs. The race would begin in dead earnest once she reached the open country.

The whole east was on fire with the sunrise when the fugitive reached the sparser vegetation on the outskirts of the jungle. Two tapirs paused in their early breakfasting upon nut-rushes, disturbed by O-Wa's heavy breathing and lagging footsteps. The thick-skinned, hairless beasts moved their sharp-eared heads from side to side as they caught sight of the bedraggled mother and child, while their prehensile noses undulated exploringly.

But O-Wa was no figure to discomfit the tapirs. She was a pitiful figure. Bleeding scratches, earth stains and greenish yellow sap streaks covered her body. Her mouth was stained, her face blotched from the juices of buds and berries devoured along the way. Her long hair, usually oiled with fat and flattened to her head, was tangled and matted by twigs and burs. Only Kaa partook of the appearance of serenity, for he slept soundly from pure exhaustion, even the lurching of his bearer insufficient to awaken him.

Lifting hollow eyes to the east the fugitive studied what she could see of the valley rim where she hoped to find refuge. Her steps faltered at what she saw. The cliffs still were many miles away, their crests, and the low craters behind the crests, barely visible through the misty atmosphere of dawn. Even the unimaginative O-Wa experienced overwhelming discouragement as she contemplated the arduous miles that lay between her and sanctuary. Yet the depression was only momentary. Feeling afresh the need for haste now that daylight would add speed to the pursuit, she broke into a stumbling run.

Quickly clearing the fringe of underbrush that bordered the plain, she started up a long incline over which a large number of quartz boulders were scattered as if by the playful hand of some behemoth son of Nature. At the top of the slope was a natural cromlech, or eroded bench, of stone, and beyond that she could see the topmost branches of a greyish green thicket. Hoping the distant vegetation signified a stream where she could wade in water and hide her trail, O-Wa redoubled her haste, leaping from boulder to boulder wherever they were situated closely enough together. In this way she avoided leaving a clear impression of her trail in the soil and grass.

Noticing that her feet sometimes left a slight stain on the boulders, she stopped and wiped away the telltale mud and sap with a handful of dry grass. Before she started on again she cast back a fearful glance at the blackish green of the jungle. No sign of human life was to be seen, and even the tapirs had moved on and vanished in the denser shrubbery.

Halfway up the slope O-Wa was apprised of the proximity of bison by the bawling of a number of calves. The beasts seemed to be on the other side of the hill north of her, doubtless watering at the stream there. She had no desire to attract the attention of the bison; they were known to charge and trample human beings caught in the open; for that matter, the

dusky rovers of the plains were likely to attack anything to which they were not accustomed. The young bulls and the cows with new-born calves were especially of uncertain temper. Once Ka-Mot had graphically described a race with death he had had with a herd of bison, and by that tale she was forewarned.

O-WA had scarcely perceived the possibility of danger from the bison when a dark form appeared on the brow of the slope, followed by another and another, until there were a score of them rising to view. Evidently they were coming up from water to begin a day of browsing on the succulent growth outlying the jungle. Being several hundred yards away the bison did not immediately see the running figure on the hillside. When they did the foremost stopped dead, shaggy heads lifted in a graven pose of curiosity. Some of them stood as high as a man's head, and with their six-foot, ox-like horns they were a sight to arrest the most courageous.

At such a distance the bison might not have been excited into chasing O-Wa had not the rear of the herd, crowding ahead, pushed the vanguard forward over the ridge. With this impetus, those observing O-Wa emitted a low bellow, tossed their massive heads and started after the running woman at an ever accelerated trot, which increased to a lope and then a gallop. The excitement quickly spread, and though the bison in the rear could not see the cause of the disturbance, they nevertheless came thundering along, as if each strove to attain a position from which the object of the chase could be perceived.

But O-Wa had too much of a lead at the outset for the herd to overtake her before she reached the summit of the slope where the cromlech afforded staunch and sufficiently elevated refuge. In a dozen long leaps from boulder to boulder the mother gained her objective, lifted Kaa to the top of the cromlech and swung herself after him.

The bison never reached the top of the slope. In the interim between their discovery of O-Wa and her successful dash to the cromlech, the bulk of the herd had milled over the ridge until the whole space between the jungle and the hill was a brownish black carpet of moving bodies. Retarded by the boulders and discouraged upon seeing their quarry perched out of reach on the table of stone, the pursuing bison allowed themselves to be pushed around the hill by the waves of galloping beasts behind. Soon the whole herd was sweeping majestically around the foot of the slope, the earth vibrating under the pounding hoofs, the air filled with the rattle of colliding horns, the bellow of bulls and the frantic bawling of calves being separated from their dams. Gradually, as the foremost slowed down and scattered, the herd's speed was lessened until at last they were ambling along at a rapid walk, still pouring over the promontory where O-Wa first had seen them.

The moment O-Wa saw that danger from the herd was past, she crawled down from her perch. Comprehending she need have no fear of Ag-Tar coming from the jungle while the herd intervened, she relaxed in a niche formed by the convergence of two boulders. Lying there she watched the herd passing by. Minute after minute they came on in an undeviating, ceaseless stream. There must have been thousands, and for O-Wa it was a stirring sight. Only once before, during a migration of the tribe, had she seen Dong-Ga in herd formation. Even Kaa, who had awakened during the jolting progress up the hill, took notice of the herd where he lay in the protecting crook of a sinewy arm. He made several attempts to get away and crawl down the slope, but O-Wa held him securely.

LUXURIATING in this brief interval of rest, O-Wa did not for some time awaken to a startling significance in the passage of the herd between her and the jungle. It came upon her in a mounting wave of exultation that brought gooseflesh to her skin. Instantaneously, her whole body was tense and trembling, and from her throat burst a cry of unbridled triumph. The myriad hoofs had obliterated her trail from the soft soil of the jungle fringe to the point where she had advanced across the boulders. Ag-Tar would be baffled for hours by the blessed intervention of the bison. Her body stains, marking the spot where she had rested, would be dry in seconds, and the slight traces remaining would be indiscernible by even the ferret eyes of the craftiest hunter. From the stony hill she could continue to hide her trail by travelling in the bed of the stream, which she could see, from where she lay, meandering eastward through patches of shrubs.

Firmly resisting a dangerous impulse to lie in wait for whoever followed her and exult at their baffiement, O-Wa spurred her tired muscles to further efforts and slunk

away from the hilltop toward the stream. She was careful to step only upon slabs of quartz imbedded in the soil along the way, and not so much as a pebble or a sand drift did she disturb to mark her passage.

As she descended the watershed she could see the rear of the bison herd advancing over the ridge where she had first observed them. When she ran lightly along the bark of a lightning-levelled sapling, which bridged the moist soil next to the water, the last of the herd were pouring up out of a lake of mud churned up while they drank.

Jumping from the end of the tree trunk into the stream O-Wa found herself knee-deep in crystal clear water that ran over a bed of clean-washed sandstone which would retain little, if any, traces of her footsteps. She waded eastward against the current, feeling her way even though she could see bottom, for she was extremely shy of deep water and feared unexpected holes in the bed. She held Kaa upon one shoulder, prepared to elevate him instantly if she slipped.

Ganoid fish, oldest of fossilized species, darted away to shadowy retreats as O-Wa advanced. Numerous odd and curiously inclined eel-like animals wriggled about on top of the water, lightly riding the ripples formed by the woman's legs. Occasionally, from the reeds close by, a stupid, flat-nosed lizard raised its head to listen to the splashing, making a raucous rattle in its throat, like the sound of a light stick being drawn along a picket fence.

Renewed strength came to O-Wa as a result of the propitious passage of the bison over her trail. There was a fresh spring to her steps along the shallows. She was so certain that Ag-Tar would be baffled for several hours at least that she paused long enough to catch a dish-shaped mollusk observed creeping across a gravel shoal, leaving in its wake a crooked, wet line. Cracking the shell with a stone, O-Wa promptly devoured with great relish the tender pink and white flesh of the invertebrate.

Once her partly dormant hunger was excited by the mussel tidbit, she could not resist frequent sallies after other mollusks and various crustaceans, such as crawfish, with which the water teemed. Before she had traversed a mile upstream she had devoured a dozen fresh-water animals, washing them down with draughts from the stream. Strength and spirits rose apace with the distention of her stomach. Kaa, who babbled in hysterical glee at the exciting sport of catching the water denizens, some of which were quite elusive, seemed to find his mother's growing cheerfulness contagious. Two miles upstream, no longer depressed by the miles ahead, O-Wa left the stream on the bank opposite the one by which she had entered it. She had selected a spot where a large patch of dried rushes had been washed flat by high water. Treading this hard mat she hoped to leave no sign as to where she had abandoned the water.

On the plain she found easy going over acres and acres of grass that were shorn to a stubble by the teeth of bison, antelope and wild horses. At an easy jog she soon covered several miles in a course bearing northeast from the stream. Upon reaching a barren mound of eroded sandstone, she climbed to the top of it and looked back. She could just make out the solitary bench of stone on the hill where the bison had passed behind her. There was no sign of trailers. All the life she could see was a band of desert horses running under a cloud of dust across the north, pursued by three monster diatrymas—Goo-La, O-Wa called them.

With teeth bared in savage delight at this continuation of good fortune, O-Wa shook her fists in the direction of the jungle in abandoned defiance of the Old Man, and over and over she repeated one expression of gloating triumph:

"Ay-ya, ay-ya, ay-ya!"

Kaa also shook tiny fists in mimicry and lustily voiced, as best his nascent larynx could vocalize, the mouth noises of his Amazon mother.

THE sun was almost in the zenith when Ag-Tar and his hunters broke out of the jungle. They were fully an hour behind their quarry for darkness had considerably delayed them. Moving at a half-crouch, long, knotty arms swinging in wide arcs, coarse hair matted to protruding brows, beady eyes fixed on the spoor of the rebel woman, they appeared more like some species of hairless apes than men. In the lead the fierce Old Man scanned the open plain, plainly chagrined that no straggling female was visible.

The Old Man, himself, did not note anything amiss when they reached the expanse of trampled turf left by the bison. He was intent upon his conning of the plain. The excited ejaculations of his men attracted his attention to a disturbing misfortune. Wheeling back, he quickly joined

In the Cave of the Bats

the five where they jabbered and pointed at the ground. Immediately grasping the import of an unforeseen difficulty, Ag-Tar let fly a grating hiss of anger. He seized his bushy hair in both hands and yanked and pulled while streams of invective flowed from his writhing lips.

But the fit of temper quickly subsided as his cunning mind comprehended the need for swift and tactical action. The trail was hidden under the feet of the bison, yet somewhere it must appear again, he reasoned. Two males he commanded to search north and south along the side of the herd-trail next to the jungle for signs of a possible doubling back on the part of the fugitive. With the other three males Ag-Tar crossed the swathe of hoof-mangled grass, hoping to find a continuation of the trail on the far side.

Long before, when O-Wa had turned east along the giant ferns, Ag-Tar had deduced that she was headed for the rim of the valley. This he had considered in his favor. On the open plain he could see her at a greater distance and could speedily overtake her with superior speed of limb. In the mind of the Old Man it was a foregone conclusion that he would run down the rebel. Yet the unexpected endurance

of O-Wa, burdened as she was with the child, coupled with the intervention of the great herd, contrived to shake the confidence of the crafty old king.

A fruitless search began that lasted for more than an hour. Finally the hunters detailed to the west side of the herd-trail returned to the starting point, having failed to find signs of a back-trail. By that time Ag-Tar and his men had examined every inch of the east side of the obliterated expanse. They had combed the slope where O-Wa had watched the herd from the rock niche, they had wound in and out among the boulders, but the silent stones gave up no tangible trace of the feet that recently had passed so swiftly over them.

Ag-Tar raged again. Back and forth he strode, beating himself, pulling his hair, gnashing his teeth. His hunters squatted, a safe distance away, watching alertly, each half expecting to feel the heavy hand of vented wrath before the tantrum was over. But, abruptly, Ag-Tar cooled down. He squatted, picked up a sliver of stone and began viciously gouging the earth, drawing irregular lines, while mumbling to himself in oral meditation. After several minutes of this mulling of the problem he suddenly arose and ordered the hunters toward the stream north of the hill.

It was a wise move. Half a mile upstream one of the males picked up a half-eaten crawfish seen floating in an eddy near the bank. The shell had been cracked by a stone, clearly indicating that one of human kind had dined upon the flesh it had protected.

This valuable clue the Old Man scrutinized for some time, emitting little grunts of satisfaction, while the males craned their necks in mute and wide-eyed curiosity.

From the spot where the crawfish had been found the band proceeded slowly and expectantly, three on each side of the stream. The Old Man racked his brain for all the tricks of hiding trail he had learned in many years of experience. Each trick he proposed to counter and forestall, but he reckoned without the instinctive cunning of the mother. He did not anticipate that O-Wa would be wise enough to cover the trail by which she quitted the stream. He overestimated her incaution consequent of anxiety. All unaware, Ag-Tar and the males walked past the lodged, flood-flattened rushes, from then on following a false lead.

FOR two hours the six kept along the banks of the stream which was steadily growing narrower and shallower as it neared its source. The end of the trail came when they rounded a barren knoll and came abruptly upon a fork in the main channel. One branch wound away northeastward through scraggy patches of dwarf conifers; the other led south, disappearing in a range of low, round-topped hills.

Dropping to hands and knees, the baffled trailers went over every foot of ground, peering into the water and among the reeds for traces of footprints in fungi or rubble. They no longer doubted they had been outwitted by a female. Somewhere between the forking of the stream and the edge of the jungle O-Wa had apparently taken wings and vanished.

Only Ag-Tar was materially disturbed. The faces of his underlings showed only indifferent resignation; one or two evinced poorly concealed satisfaction. They had no personal grudges in the matter. It was between the Old Man and the female. The Old Man they obeyed, but feel for him and with him they did not. In all they did they looked to Ag-Tar for orders and for motives, but they acted without sincerity. In them was the blindness of the slave, contented in servility, happy to be relieved of self-direction and moral responsibility.

While the hunters squatted for a brief rest Ag-Tar paced back and forth, beating his hands together, gimlet eyes fixed on the ground. He faced the distressing comprehension that he must, temporarily at least, abandon the trail. Already he had been absent from the tribe for a day and a night, too long a time to risk the security of his throne. He had known kings to return to their kingdoms after an absence of only a day to find their subjects scattered to the four winds, and only the empty barrows and a few bleached bones to show that there ever had been a kingdom. The punishment of one rebel was ill recompense for the total loss of a kingdom. At last he turned to his hunters, who jumped up instantly at his sign.

"Og-Pa, Kaz." Ag-Tar fixed the two addressed with a mandatory gaze. "Go to the cliffs in the sunrise. Bring me the hair of the woman's head. Bring me the head of the unnamed man-child."

"Ai-ee," chorused Og-Pa and Kaz.

Ag-Tar turned to the other three: "Ro-Lak, Zuk, Deg return to the tribe with the Old Man of them." Again he turned commanding eyes on Og-Pa and Kaz: "When

the sun is low after one dark I return. Meet me where the stream goes two ways. Uncha!"

Uncha being the sound symbol for action, Og-Pa and Kaz promptly set out toward the cliffs, following the northeast branch of the stream. Ag-Tar wheeled and started west over the back-trail at a rapid jog, Ro-Lak, Zuk and Deg falling in behind.

Og-Pa and Kaz kept on at a swinging walk until the home-going detail passed out of sight behind a knoll, whereupon they quickly slackened pace and proceeded with many a glance behind to ascertain that the Old Man did not see them loitering.

"The trail is long, it has no end," imparted Kaz.

"The female is far away; I am tired," returned Og-Pa, wearily.

Kaz crossed his fingers and tapped his breast, meaning he agreed.

"The crawfish are young and tender in this water," signed Og-Pa, his steps lagging more and more.

Again Kaz agreed, even more emphatically and enthusiastically.

Abruptly the two stopped with sundry guilty glances at the point where they had last seen the Old Man. Then they saw the massive shoulders of Ag-Tar rise to view out of a patch of reeds beyond the knoll. Though Ag-Tar was faced the other way, they wheeled in a flash and made as if to resume their way to the cliffs. Presently they ventured another look behind. Again the Old Man had vanished, a clump of horsetails now effectually screening the home-going four.

THE instant Og-Pa and Kaz were confident that Ag-Tar would not reappear they both jumped into the stream and began snatching right and left for the elusive crawfish. For upwards of half an hour they caught and devoured crawfish and mollusks until they could eat no more.

"Gu, gu," grunted Og-Pa as he climbed up on the bank, shook himself violently and squatted to ease his stomach. Breathing stertorously, he began with great pains to pick the shreds of meat out of his teeth with a huge, hooked forefinger.

Kaz indecisively contemplated the remains of a large clam. He started to finish it, stopped, passed a ruminative hand over his paunch, then tossed the clam into the reeds on the bank.

"Will we find the mate of Ka-Mot and the man-child?" signed Og-Pa.

"No, we will sleep," replied Kaz, while he carefully removed a thorn from the leathery sole of one foot. "When the Old Man comes we will say we could not find them."

"If the Old Man learns we sleep he will kill us," said Og-Pa.

"Death comes to all," signed and spoke Kaz, with a contemptuous grunt.

"I do not understand," conveyed Og-Pa.

Kaz repeated the spontaneous fatalism and lay back with a tired groan.

Og-Pa's loose scalp rolled back from his slanting brow, lifting his eyelids and widening his little eyes. Comprehension dawned slowly, for the combination of signs and syllables was a new one. When he did grasp it he was immensely pleased. "Kaz is wise!" he ejaculated. "One light we eat the crawfish. One dark comes the long sleep. We will rest. U-Puk, the sabretooth will get the woman. If Ag-Tar learns we sleep—death comes to all."

Repeating this gloomy phrase over and over, with ever increasing delight at the mind pictures it conjured for him, Og-Pa composed himself alongside his burly companion. Neither had fear of surprise by wild beasts. Never, while on the trail, did they sleep soundly, unless in an unusually impregnable retreat. They lay in a stupor, a state of semi-consciousness, prepared to bound up at the first rustle of hostile footfall. Only in the home barrows, with entrances barred with boulders, did these progenitors of man allow themselves deep slumber. Their lives frequently depended upon an inherited and cultivated ability to sleep with eyes half open. They had learned the wisdom of the beast to defeat the purpose of the beast, in ages of costly struggles to learn.

In this wise the minions of Ag-Tar served the brute god in the absence of that fleshly deity. Thus was the shadow of a new god cast upon the land as the fugitive toiled eastward to freedom on the rim of the brute god's domain.

CHAPTER III

THE GOOD SIGN

A VOLCANIC convulsion of former ages, causing the subsidence of the river basin, had ostensibly formed the east walls of the valley. Basically of red sandstone, with intervals of limestone shale and outcroppings of quartz, the cliffs, and the approaches to the cliffs, were capped and coned by crusts and fumaroles of age-hardened lava. Towering to a

height of nearly a thousand feet in a series of irregularly defined terraces, sheer drops of a hundred feet or more, they were visible for miles as they wound like some gargantuan reptile between lowland plain and highland desert.

Lonely and barren, save for clumps of stunted conifers and fungi around the rare springs, these volcanic crags repelled life from their labyrinthical ledges, caves and fissures. Only scorpions, bats and predatory birds stirred the melaconite dust of cavern and crevice. Jungle beasts were seldom seen there; even the itinerant sabre-tooth tigers avoided the formidable rim, and the tribe of Ag-Tar had come to call it *woo-ga,* meaning tabu.

Late the day of the auspicious outwitting of Ag-Tar, the trail-worn figure of O-Wa, bearing a fretful man-child, reached the lava-crusted soil-cap at the foot of a particularly rugged portion of the valley wall, and began winding in and out and around the various formations of igneous boulders and talus slips. Her feet were torn by sharp stones, her skin burnt brick-red by long, unaccustomed exposure to unalleviated sunlight. Yet, forlorn as she physically appeared, there was a triumphant gleam in her dark, sunken eyes. Frequently she imparted a conciliatory phrase of jargon to her child. But Kaa was not to be conciliated.

Interminable hours' jolting and bumping in his mother's arms, scratched by thorns and frightened by lemurs and lizards, were not to be erased by lullabies and embraces. The man-child demanded peace and quiet, and with lusty lungs he voiced his demands. In his strident voice was evidence that only by the standards of the primitive was he a puny child. The puny child would have died the first day of that mad flight through the jungles of the river valley.

Searching for a secluded nook in which to make a halt of more or less permanency, O-Wa proceeded northward along the foot of the cliffs. A dozen times she stopped to peer under shelves of rock, or to scan the lofty face of the lower terrace. It was an hour before she found what she was looking for—a deep fissure winding up the frowning front of a bulging escarpment. Below the fissure was a small lake or pool, apparently fed by an underground spring released by volcanic disturbances. A sparse growth of hardy shrubs had found root around the water in sand-drift and eroded soil, and a number of large, web-footed birds, the hesperornis, with penguin wings and saw-teethed bills, haunted the place, frequently diving for the ganoid fish that swarmed in shadow-like schools in the crystal-clear depths. The slapping sound made by the diving birds was unaccountably loud in the deep silence of those massy environs.

With considerable difficulty O-Wa made her way up the fissure, carrying Kaa, by sedulous use of one arm and both legs. It was a dizzy climb. Few footholds were available, and there was imminent danger that she would slip and fall, crushing both herself and child upon the lava beds beneath. Then, at a height seventy-five feet above the lake, she saw, not far above, what appeared to be a large, deeply indented ledge. She could have asked for nothing more appropriate. In a final, scratching scramble, she pulled herself and Kaa upon the level floor of an imbedded shelf about twelve paces long and four deep, the stone roof half-vaulted to the height and a half of a man at the outer edge and converging with the floor in the body of the cliff.

AT FIRST there appeared to be but one means of ingress or egress and that the fissure up which she had climbed to the ledge. Then, upon more detailed investigation, she found, on the side opposite the fissure approach, a protruding vein of quartz, which provided a niggard foothold along the face of the cliff. By stretching as far as possible over the ledge she could see that this vein sloped gradually and windingly upward to the top of the lower terrace. If cornered on the ledge by enemies one could have retreated by edging along the quartz-vein inch by inch.

O-Wa was seized with vertigo at the mere suggestion of such a perilous venture, yet there was satisfaction in the knowledge that the sunken ledge was not an inescapable trap in the event of a siege.

Here was a natural, impregnable fortress with precipitous approach and secret postern gate. Below was water; in the water was food. She did not concretely consider the inaccessibility of the water if cut off from the fissure-trail to the foot of the cliff. Considerations were rare phenomena in her process of instinctive reasoning. She acted upon direct impetus, or not at all.

A few fragments of the cliff had fallen away from the roof of the ledge. These O-Wa proceeded to build into a rude parapet along the outside edge of her refuge. Uppermost in her mind was the safety of

Kaa. He had not yet learned to fear long falls. Lessons in the laws of danger and the never ending imminency of danger were still to be taught him. But the parapet had another motive in the building; it would shield the movements of any one on the ledge from the sharp eyes of hunters on the plains. A wolf would have sought a burrow for a like reason, but the human mind associated the ledge and the burrow, the advantages of each, and created the missing link between these advantages.

Life beat high within her as she stretched her tired body upon the warm ledge, eyes fixed upon the plain through an interstice in the newly-erected parapet. Her grief for Ka-Mot was assuaged by fair promise of new freedom and all the gratifying derivatives of freedom. Her first-born had been saved by the timely passing of Dong-Ga, the bison, and by the good omen of Dong-Ga her prospects for future security were brightened. Yet, vivid still, as it would ever be, was her memory of the snarling, browbeating Ag-Tar. Lying there in complete relaxation she frequently started nervously, fancying she heard the strident bellow of the Old Man. While life was in her she would fear the wrath of the patriarch, with a fear that had a proportionate counterpart in hatred. For she was fashioned in a daring mould, and the courage she had had to defy death and tradition was the measure of her capacity to hate, as only the savage, and the female, can hate.

Already the phonetic by which she designated her first-born was music in her ears because of its signification of a successful defiance of the law of flesh. Scornfully perverse, she disdained naming her babe. As Kaa, the Unnamed, he was dearest to her, as Kaa he was symbolic of all the *kaas* who had died in the name of the law, and for one of which she had placed her life in the scales of Fate and had outbalanced Death. Death. Later, even a stronger motive for rearing her child as Kaa, the Unnamed, would grow out of her hate for Ag-Tar.

FOR several days O-Wa did little save watch from her high retreat. A broad vista extended below her within the confines of which she was certain Ag-Tar would come, if come he did. She was prepared to resist with the last breath of life in her, and as weapons of defence she heaped stones at the top of the fissure up which any one must come if they were to take her life and Kaa's. But with the favorable passing of each day the doubtfulness of her discovery increased. She had well hidden her trail; even the craftiest trailers had been baffled, else by this time the Old Man would have been storming the refuge in the cliff.

By perilous experiment she tested the plinth of quartz leading around the sheer wall of the cliff from the north end of the ledge. Though nearly overcome by vertigo, she succeeded in reaching the top of the

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first terrace, thus proving her ability to evacuate the ledge if pressed too hard or besieged too long. It was a daring climb, clinging to the sun-hot rock, almost by finger-nails and toes, with the hundred-foot drop to the lake or lava beds, but O-Wa would repeat the venture, even bearing Kaa, if circumstances made it necessary. Cowardice was not in her when confronted by motionless manifestations of Nature. Only the unknown or superior life-forms she feared, and much of that fear was instinctive caution.

The retreat to the terrace top precluded any necessity of storing food for siege, even if O-Wa had thought of such a provision. She fished in the little lake only sufficiently to satisfy her daily appetite. Kaa existed solely upon his mother's milk, though frequently she coaxed him with choice morsels of fish, ever solicitous in regard to his normality, which in ordinary children would have brought an appetite for meat even before the age of six moons, development being correspondingly rapid in an age when propagation of kind must come early if death were not to make that supreme motive of life impossible.

Two weeks passed. Everlasting vigilance became monotonous. Then the day came when O-Wa received one of the greatest frights of her life.

She was halfway up the fissure to the ledge, with a catch of fish strung on a long, dried root, when she chanced to look behind her over the plain. About half a mile away, on the crest of a long hill, three males had come into view, humping along straight toward the ledge. A giddiness seized upon her as she flattened herself to the fissure, back to the stone, nostrils flaring, heart pounding. There she clung, immobile as if changed into part of the cliff. In truth her sun-browned body was almost the color of the rocks, and she made no mistake in lying absolutely motionless. A mere flicker of movement on the face of the cliff might have attracted the roving eyes of the hunters, who evidently had not yet discovered her. That Ag-Tar was not among them gave her no cause to believe she had nothing to fear from them.

SHOULDERS and back to the bottom of the fissure, legs braced against its sides to hold her steady, she waited tensely. Far up on the ledge she could hear faintly the wailing of Kaa, penned in by the parapet. A bat-winged lizard-bird floated lazily across her line of vision. From below sounded the intermittent, barely audible *lunk, lunk* of the diving birds as they plunged for fish in the tranquil water.

On came the males in single file, about ten paces apart, the sun glinting dully on their oily skins, heads restlessly turning from side to side and behind in constant vigilance. And still O-Wa did not move. Only in her face was the strained immobility which attends paralytic suspense.

Then, when the males reached a point nearly a quarter mile from the sunken ledge, where the footing became exceedingly uneven, the foremost stopped and pointed north. The other two joined the leader, engaged in a brief colloquy of gestures, then all three turned north and went plodding on in their long, springy strides.

Still O-Wa did not move a muscle, save for her black eyes, which followed the departing males as they descended the bank of a ravine and were gradually lost to view. A little longer she remained graven in the fissure, a stone among stones, then, reasonably convinced that the hunters would not reappear, she came alive with furtive swiftness, and completed her climb to the ledge in a frantic scramble.

The moment she reached the ledge she rushed to Kaa, clapped a heavy hand over his mouth and stifled his crying, as if even such a puny sound might reach the ears of the hunting males. With the baby in her arms she crawled to the parapet and looked out. Through the spaces between the stones she again sighted the hunters moving along the bottom of the ravine where she first had lost sight of them.

She watched them with growing relief as they vanished one by one around the buttress of a neighboring crag. It had been a narrow escape, but propitious. Less than an hour later O-Wa was greatly excited by the appearance of a herd of bison moving southward majestically, a dark stream on the shimmering surface of the plain. She gazed at the distant herd with open mouth, hands spasmodically clenching and unclenching, gutturals bubbling up from her throat.

Dong-Ga had saved her from Ag-Tar at the edge of the jungle, or so she thought. Again Dong-Ga had appeared in the hour of near-tragedy for all her hopes. It was a sign from the great unknown, the thing that made her look behind when nothing was there. It was a good sign, not a bad sign. In the savage, yet vividly perceptive mind of O-Wa a train of mind-pictures and associations, of vague, untenable reflec-

tions, began a slow, progressive movement, an intensification of the primal yearning of mankind for the unattainable, the magic and omnipotence of the god-kind.

On the day after the passing of the hunters, O-Wa went slinking out over the near by plain in a strange quest that bore stranger fruit. What she finally located in a ravine and brought back to the ledge by much labor was the skull of a bison, bleached glaring white by the sun, with horns a double arm's length from tip to tip. This she wedged into the wall of the parapet, and before it she made the sign of obeisance as she previously had made that sign to the Old Man and to Ka-Mot.

Frequently she did this, and even more frequently she sat before it, Kaa in her arms, wondering and speculating concerning the good sign of Dong-Ga. It took the place of Ag-Tar, who formerly had been the recipient of highest allegiance. It was an outlet for that indefinable, half-fearful longing within her extemporized by the eyes that could not be seen and the whispers that had no mouths. She saw in it a relativity to all the connotations of life. It was an awesome, inviolable god, with all the incalculable and inexpressible wisdom of plant and beast, earth and sky.

THE rainy season came on to insure the safety of the fugitives for the few weeks of its duration. Man stayed close to his barrow throughout the annual downpour; even hunger must be acute to draw him into the fury of the storm. In floods and sheets, day after day, the grey heavens loosed an aqueous plethora upon streaming valley and frowning cliffs. Rarely the sun pushed through the sodden overhang, and when it did, man and beast crawled out of hibernation to slosh the puddles in a brief hunt for saturated food. Half drowned by the beating in of the rain, O-Wa climbed down the fissure during these infrequent intermissions to fish and gather the fresh shoots of white fungus that sprouted overnight under the stimulus of the warm rain.

Near the end of the precipitant period, the rain fell more unsteadily. Days came irksomely long under lowering clouds. The swish and rush of rain would then have been a pleasing break in gloomy monotony. Life hovered in suspense, awaiting the rejuvenating sun, that did not come.

But O-Wa was not entirely lacking in employment and diversion with which to enliven the dull hours of the rainy season. Among other lessons she taught Kaa to walk. There proved to be nothing congenitally wrong with him. He was merely the exception that proved the rule of normal nascency in the primitive scale of life and the growth of life. Some pathological retardation had denied him the rapid development of his biological age. At eight moons, instead of six, he attained normal strength and appetite for meat to the great exultation of his mother.

With the waking of his walking thews Kaa entered upon a new and rapidly widening scope of life. Out of the fantasies of the nursing stage he retained and vivified outstanding incidents and pictures, moulting the dross of trivial experience. The ogre face of Ag-Tar he retained, limned in fire upon the tablet of memory, and frequently he waked from sound slumber against the warm body of O-Wa, shrieking his terror in consequence of nightmare tragedy in which figured the Old Man's dour countenance and the Old Man's roaring voice.

Ka-Mot, his father, was an infrequently recurring image in the irregular circle of light comprising the mouth of a barrow. Of Ka-Mot's relativity to himself, or to his mother, Kaa had no inkling. For Ka-Mot he had no feeling of want as he did for his mother, nor had he a fear complex for Ka-Mot as he had for the mind-picture of Ag-Tar. Very early in life he began to draw such vague distinctions between the definite and indefinite. The rain that sprayed over the parapet was definite in its uncomfortableness; his mother was definite in the relativity of fear. On the other hand, the mind-picture of Ka-Mot was indefinite, having no significance either of pain or pleasure, and the skull of the bison, wedged into the stones of the parapet, was indefinite because he had no conception of the why of it. Yet, even to the indefinite a mind-picture or a sensation must have attained singularity. Without singularity an object or an emotion was as unfathomable and untenable as the passage of time.

PAIN came soon to join the hunger associations he had with his mother. Her hand was harsh and stinging betimes. There was no doubt about its rebuke, about the language it spoke. The hand hurt. That which caused the hand to hurt must be avoided. Kaa learned to avoid the parapet at the edge of the ledge. Anywhere on the ledge he was free to go except the parapet and the niche formed by the concurrence of the fissure leading down from

the ledge. From the pain of O-Wa's hand he came to associate pain with the parapet, and thus was the lesson inculcated in him that the parapet was tabu, and from that that heights were tabu, because they led to dangerous falls. So each tabu was ramified in a never-ending progression of ever-complicating associations and tabus.

Many laws of life, and of the prolongation of life, he learned by transgression and punishment therefor. Not infrequently he suffered much. For O-Wa did not compromise with disobedience. He could not shout loudly for one thing, a tabu he found particularly difficult to practise sedulously. Not until he had been punished four times did he master the tabu of loud mouth noises. The first of these punishments was only a stinging slap on the side of the head; the second was a stunning slap; the third knocked him down, and the fourth rendered him unconscious for several seconds.

Yet, after he had learned the lesson, and between punishments, which covered a period of several days, O-Wa cuddled and caressed him. In animal cruelty she expressed a humane love for him. Had she gently remonstrated when he climbed the parapet, doubtless he would have climbed there many times a day, until eventually he fell to certain death on the rocks below.

It was the infallible pedagogy of the wild, this curriculum of compounded punishment. By it the brown baby learned a distinction between good and evil, between the tabu and the tenable; by it the cubs of the sabre-tooth learned like lessons. Physical punishment was instinctive, and, as such, it was a cruelty that was the quintessence of kindness. Had O-Wa been gifted with analytic and speculative qualities of mind she probably would have concluded that true parental love comprised a paradoxical combine of tolerance and intolerance, of heartless abuse and the opponent of abuse.

Kaa never left the ledge from the time he was hidden there until he became strong enough and old enough to climb the fissure unaided, and as fast as his mother could climb it. In this O-Wa was adamant and routinary. She blocked egress to the fissure with a boulder each time she climbed down for food and water. At first, when the baby toddled after her, she punished him severely. Kaa came to learn that while his mother vanished at will below the confines of the ledge, such glamorous adventure was for him positively tabu, though he could assign no reason to it. And so, during his mother's brief absences, he played with bright-colored stones, or amused himself by running back and forth along the ledge, making incoherent, spontaneous mouth noises in expression of his perfect joy of life. But he never raised his voice to a pitch audible as far as the foot of the cliff.

There were laws both general and specific in the daily life of the brown baby. He knew no clear distinctions between them, yet he was definitely guided by the immutable cogency of these distinctions. General laws were those it was natural for him to obey: the *must* of eat, drink and sleep. Specific laws included the tabu of the parapet, the tabu of the loud mouth noises and the tabu of biting his mother. Transgression of the general law was punished by inner suffering, hunger, thirst, fatigue; transgression of specific law was punished by outer suffering, the strong hand of O-Wa, and the snarling, berating mouth noises of O-Wa. None he understood, yet all he accepted and obeyed.

AS THE mother cat plays with an unigenital kitten, so O-Wa played with her lone offspring. Innate in her was the comprehension of a grave need in the young for companionship. She did not think of this, yet she observed it. Had Kaa brother or sister she would have sat quietly by, sleepily looking on at their antics, directing when able to teach and direct. As it was, she tussled with Kaa, tickled his ribs, or rolled a round stone across the ledge, watching with bright and eager eye his indefatigable pursuit and retrieval of the weighty ball. Hours at a time she entertained him, unconscious that the gymnastics she urged and demonstrated were developing nascent thews, educating new combines of awkward muscles, fitting the child to survive among the fit in the eternal primeval battle whose lists he must eventually enter.

Months slipped by marked only by the phases of the moon. Came the tropic summer when the plains turned deeper green with fresh growths following the long rainy season. But there was no radical change in the life of the pair in the cliff above the little lake. Fear and mother-love bound O-Wa in chains of monotonous exile. She fished and drank at the pool under the ledge; she slept many hours in her high retreat with the brown baby snuggled close. She watched the panorama of life upon the plains, the passing of the auspicious bison, the pursuit of Se-Ka, the

desert horse, by Goo-La, the monster bird that could not fly. She pointed out to Kaa the various animals appearing in the confines of the view, repeating their names, or signing the connotations of their actions. All this was a component of the tutelage of love. Each word, law, or gesture was a vital annotation to the blank bion of herself, moulding the plastic clay into enduring form and substance.

The young mother experienced deep satisfaction as she marked the rapid development of her first-born. Here was a consummate exoneration for his rescue from the fate of the sick children and the toothless old women. Her pride in progeny waxed greater still when the brown elf of the cliffs demonstrated, with increasing frequency, precocities of intelligence and physical agility. Here was an anomaly of traditional regularity proving the progressive value of anomalies. Here was the scion of rebellion and courage illustrating the law that like begets like. Ka-Mot, the father, had died embattled with oppression in the name of liberty and ambition; O-Wa, the mother, had likewise challenged the Fates by shattering precedent of primal law. And from the fusion of these seeds had come a higher type, unsatisfied and seeking, questioning precedent, acting upon inspired spontaneity.

WITH celerity and uncommon aptitude Kaa mastered the mouth noises of his mother's scant vocabulary. Scarcely had the first sign of molars appeared in his jaws when he was calling by name the various appurtenances of his sequestered existence, expressing wants of appetite and woe of soul by sign and sound symbol. He lured the birds to the ledge with tidbits of fish. He threw stones into the lake and coined a new word to designate the splash of water. He fashioned fantastic diagrams with colored pebbles on the hard floor of his barren nursery and mastered the art of chipping flints within the limitations of his strength to wield the heavy chalcedony hammer.

By the time he was weaned he had made miniature implements at which his mother was amazed and incredulous. The ledge became littered with stone implements and figures of flint and chert and jasper. From saw-edged knives to grotesque attempts at statuary the coterie ranged in remarkable variety of form and color. It was the mute yearning in him for freedom ceaselessly effervescing, unstudied in its creations, yet prolific of the studied. In the stones he fashioned the overflow of repressions. The beasts of the plain that he longed to trail and hunt he brought to the ledge in misshapen lumps of stone endowed by their sculptor with life and vivid tangibility of form. The acute perceptions of his embryo imagination were his models, the denials of his life his inspirations. In a modern time he would have been a child prodigy in art, one of those sun-motes among dull atoms, that rise beyond the prosaic to the intangible and glamorous.

Meanwhile the litanies of the bison skull went on apace. Each day that closed without the materialization of the Old Man, and the certitude of death inherent in such materialization, strengthened the belief of O-Wa in the favorableness of the bison, therefore the auspiciousness of its symbol.

Her range of meditations was too narrow for her to grasp the actualities of the situation, that once completely lost her trail could not be found again save by chance, that Ag-Tar could ill-afford the long absences from the tribe required to locate her tiny niche among a wilderness of similar niches, that without a leader the other males shirked the task of running down the rebel, having none of them sufficient personal motive in the chase, and therefore gorging and sleeping on the trail.

Nor could she know that it was really her water-wading and her leaving the water by way of the lodged reeds that had misled Ag-Tar. No, in her mind there was a higher power moving the pawns on the chess board of fortune.

Whenever Dong-Ga appeared on the plains chills crept up her spine as superstition vested godliness in the body of the beast. For beast was not beast in the mind of O-Wa if beast were to signify inferiority. She did not conceive herself superior to the beast. She visualized her kind as merely a species among other species, each of these countless species having individual and inequable gifts of survival and weapons with which to survive. Those species surviving in greatest numbers, or in longer individual life-spans, those with the strongest thews, the sharpest horns or claws—they were superior, even to man, because of the invulnerability of their life-tenacity. The mastodon was superior to her because invulnerable to her weapons, and, relatively, the bison was superior to her because, while not altogether invulnerable singly, they were invulnerable *en masse*, easily able to crush the life-tenacity she possessed, or that of any number of her kind. Therefore, a beast,

being superior in survival, readily assumed the halo of the unknown and the ineffable power analogous to the unknown.

She had no inkling that Kaa, a man-child, might take unto himself the god-idea of his mother, that he, too, had inherited the need of a protectorate. Having herself always paid allegiance to man, she did not visualize man as paying allegiance to another, still higher authority, usually an Old Man. She had no cogent ruminations concerning this, being at first wholly unaware that god-ideas could have any bearing on the rearing of Kaa.

Vaguely she saw the eventuality that Kaa would grow away from her, that one day he would need her no longer, that by primal law she would drive him from her if he were reluctant to leave. But of the abstract ideas he would take with him into maturity as a result of her tutelage she had no conception. Her pedagogics all were rooted in instinctive promptings relative to preparation for the battle of mere existence.

Then came a day when a new vista was opened. Kaa knelt by her side before the skull of Dong-Ga, and he placed his hand upon his head in the sign of *gachu,* "I serve." It was puerile mimicry, yet sombrely enacted in the restrictions of true mimicry. O-Wa was extremely puzzled by the incident and its significance. She approved it unquestionably and painstakingly explained to Kaa that Dong-Ga was *takuluk,* "good sign." Yet her cogitations did not end with approval and encouragement. The secret of a new power had been partly unfolded by the unquestioned acceptance of her god-idea by Kaa.

She could make of him what she would. He could be taught hatred and vengeance as well as devotion and obedience. Eventually this train of ideas led O-Wa to the hate-motive in herself, thence to Ag-Tar, the Old Man, killer of Ka-Mot and cause of her exile. In consequence of this the tutelage of love became inextricably interwoven and deeply stained with a new and vindictive tutelage, the tutelage of hate.

CHAPTER IV

THE TUTELAGE OF HATE

IN the warp and woof of O-Wa was the seed to achieve higher planes, but the fissures of her brain were wrought in rigid channels of bigoted dogma and precedent. Constructive thought defeated itself in futile grindings upon the axis of inspiration. Intensified in her was the sorrow of all mankind down through the ages—the potent dream and the impotent strivings to attain the dream. Vivid in itself was the concept of Kaa's susceptibility to perversions of instinct as well as naturalisms of instinct. But the obstacle encountered when she attempted to convey perversions of instinct outreached her.

But a powerful impetus for initiation into the creed of hate existed in Kaa unknown to his mother. It was his memory pictures of Ag-Tar. Already he had fear of Ag-Tar deeply impressed upon him. In his nightmares he expressed this, and fear is the progenitor of hate. And so, quite unexpectedly, a solution to the problem was presented.

O-Wa had climbed the fissure with a string of fish. She had not the slightest premonition that anything unusual was in the wind, though premonitions were exceptionally frequent and acute in her mental processes. She found him so intent upon a new precocity that he was unaware she had come up behind him. What she saw transfixed her. She could only stand there staring, fish clutched in one hand, nostrils inquisitively tremulous.

Kaa was scratching a strangely proportioned and harmonized series of lines upon the slanting stone that formed the roof of the ledge. Unexplainable inspiration or suggestion had turned him from crude sculpturing in stone to cruder line drawing. He was so intensely concentrated that his mouth hung gaping open, and his facial expression suffered ludicrous twists and changes. His eyes were scarcely three inches from a hand cramped tenuously to the haft of a sliver of flint. Minute after minute O-Wa watched the amazing progress of the stone stylus.

The thing was incredible, awesome, idolatrous. The contour and features of a face were growing clearer and clearer out of the maze of repeated lines, growing as if by black magic upon the smooth surface of the ledge roof. It was a face of dread familiarity, a leering, ferocious countenane, with deep-set eyes, bristly hair and mouth half-opened in a vicious snarl. It was the head of Ag-Tar, the Old Man!

The sharp cry that broke from O-Wa upon recognition of the likeness brought Kaa out of his trance. He leaped back and away from his mother, one hand flung up to ward off an expected blow. For O-Wa's cry had been of an intonation inseparably associated with the breaking of specific laws of which there were so many to be

learned. But he speedily discovered he had made no unwitting transgression. Anger had been in the voice of O-Wa, but it was anger at the thing created, not the creator. Kaa watched her intently as she cautiously advanced upon the tracery. She seemed to have endowed it with living substance and was consequently a-tremble in tense readiness for instant flight or self-protection in the event the drawing stepped out of the rock.

"Woo-ga!" she exclaimed, while one hand was cautiously extended to touch the carving. Once she had explored it with her fingers she seemed somewhat reassured that the face was no more than motionless stone. But her incredulousness and amazement were in nowise lessened when she stepped back to view the lines from a different angle. At length her eyes began shifting to Kaa and then back to the drawing, with approval for one and suspicion for the other. Mingled with marvel at the genius of her child was distress and disconcernment at this strange likeness of Ag-Tar, the hated brute god.

Such emotion was contagious in the extreme. Kaa ran to O-Wa, clinging to her staunch body in a fear that was born purely of filial sympathy for fear. O-Wa caressed him and murmured a guttural sedative. Whereupon, with sudden brightening of spirit, Kaa sprang away from her, apparently brimming with some inspired confidence which he desired to impart.

"Takuluk!" he exclaimed, pointing to the bison skull, the good sign. Then, turning quickly, he pointed at the drawing of Ag-Tar, ejaculating "woo-ga!" meaning tabu, or the bad sign. He had drawn a new distinction, beyond the distinctions of his kind, the distinction between kind god and brute god, and he was entirely unaware that in this distinction consciously attained he had opened a new world for himself. His was only the transport of a child that sees a fairy in a flower. He saw that his mother was pleased, though overcome by sterner feelings than mere pleasure, therefore he was increasingly happy, and consequently in a receptive state of mind.

HE gave alert attention when O-Wa squatted to a level with his eyes and began to talk in the sign and syllable language by which they communicated. In his great eagerness to understand clearly his lips moved with O-Wa's, like a deaf person's, and frequently he shaped with his own digits the picture signs that his mother formed.

"It is Ag-Tar, the Old Man, upon the stone," said O-Wa. "You have made his face there. Ag-Tar killed Ka-Mot, the father of you. The Old Man is woo-ga. He would kill you because you were a sick child. He would kill the mother of you because she ran away with you. The Old Man looks for you and the mother of you. When he comes he will kill you and me."

An expression of incomprehension showed that Kaa had been unable entirely to grasp all these new and dreadful relations of life. He signed in return: "What is Ka-Mot, the father of me?"

"Ka-Mot is you much larger," signed O-Wa. "Ka-Mot was the mate of me. From Ka-Mot and O-Wa you came. All man has the father. But the father of you sleeps the long sleep. Ag-Tar, the Old Man, killed Ka-Mot. Woo-ga, Ag-Tar, the man you make on the stone."

"I see him in the dark when the eyes do not see the things of the light," replied Kaa, sombrely. "Woo-ga, Ag-Tar, the bad sign. Ag-Tar killed the father of me. Ag-Tar will kill us when he comes. Woo-ga, Ag-Tar, Woo-ga!"

Yet, for all his effort to respond in kind to the vindictiveness of his mother, there was no sincerity of hate in him, nor the comprehension of hate as an emotion. In his rapt countenance there was more of wonder at the new death-idea and the dark mystery attendant upon the sleep of no awakening.

O-Wa saw that hate was not inherent in the man-child, that hate must come from either experience, as she had learned to hate, or from habit, the creator of perverted instincts. Hence, with a motive so obscure and profound that she, herself, had but a vague inkling of it, she proceeded to give Kaa his first lesson in hate and the superficialities that evinced hate. Without a sign as to what she intended doing, she whirled with a low snarl, and with suddenly unleashed fury, attacked the stone tracery of the head of Ag-Tar.

She scratched and tore it, snarling and hissing. She dug at it until her nails bled. Self-inflicted wounds seemed to heighten her frenzy. She redoubled the ferocity of her clawing and striking at the symbol of hate and fear. Wild gutturals flowed from her lips in rapid succession. Some were interpretable, others only emotionally tenable. Prominent among these invectives were the words: "Kill! Bad sign! Ag-Tar! Ka-Mot! Kill Ag-Tar!" with reiterations and various combinations. Lacking power of repression, and likewise desire for re-

pression, she quickly ran amuck as the beast goes mad. In an orgy of blood-lust, all her sufferings and fears freed from the inertia of dormancy, she flung herself upon the stone, unmindful of bruises and lacerations. Even her lips and nose began to bleed from vain attempts to bite the stone.

The orgy continued until at last, completely exhausted, her fury spent, she rolled to the ledge, a quivering, malign thing, covered with blood, flecks of foam upon her lips. Kaa, terror-stricken by this metamorphosed woman who had been his quiet, routinary mother, could conceive of no causation for such tantrums. Yet, in him was a vaguely defined response, which caused his scalp to stiffen strangely, and his hands to perspire in the palms.

WHAT Kaa had witnessed was a prognostic of the tribal war-dance, the atavic dance of blood, and all the hate inherent in blood-shedding and its causations. It was the demoniac expression of self-abandon to death in battle, of inebriate challenge to the Fates that designed death, however violent. All savages understood it; all the people of the world would eternally observe it in great variety of form, from street parade to tearing of the hair. In it Kaa glimpsed the appalling tablets of a new doctrine, a new god-idea, dire counterpart of the first god-idea.

Henceforth, beyond all power of his own control, the creed of hate would grow upon him, with purpose of blood and motive of death, whose end was vengeance upon the slayer of his father, the ill-omen of his life and O-Wa's. Only the stark differentiation of Dong-Ga, the good sign, would ameliorate the devastating influence of the hate fetish. Dong-Ga was the day sign, the happy sign; Ag-Tar was the night sign, the bad, brooding sign, indicative of all that was evil and proscribed.

By the war-dance and repetitions of it, Kaa came to know that Ag-Tar was definitely associated with death, the sleep of no awakening, and that he, Kaa the Unnamed, was inseparably associated both with death and with Ag-Tar. As he mimicked his mother in her allegiance to Dong-Ga, so he mimicked her in the dance of hate. In the expression of his hatred of hate he expressed his burning resolve to beat and scratch and slay the sign of hate.

So it was that before Kaa had quite gotten out of babyhood he had acquired a fixed idea of predestiny. So he came to know that one day, dim time in far-off tomorrow, he was to slay Ag-Tar, lift the burden of apprehension from his mother, avenge the death of Ka-Mot, and vindicate his own right to survive as Fate had allowed him to survive. Further, he learned that he must ever remain Kaa, the Unnamed, for by that cognomen Ag-Tar would know him for what he was, a pariah returned from exile with the certain bloody purpose of such a pariah.

Closely attendant on the initiation of the hate-idea was the liberation of the brown boy from the narrow confines of the sunken ledge. He was then five years old, having lived almost all of his life on the cliff ledge. In common with life-forms having weak powers of survival, he had grown with exceptional rapidity, attaining a development at five years of age equal to an advanced and protected life-form eight years of age. Enforced and voluntary exercise had shaped him in a wiry mould. He could leap half his height from a standing start, throw a stone fifty yards with uncommon accuracy, and could place either foot behind his head with little difficulty.

All in all, Kaa was a fine individual of his species. Furthermore, there was in him a difference from his kind not wholly consisting in perfection of inherited characteristics. A portion of that difference had been created by his isolated environment. But the fact that he was a tabu child bore strong probability of fundamental cause. A survival of the subnormal type, comprising executed children, it was not unnatural that he should bear a number of marks of differentiation from the average or normal child.

It may have been that his physical growth had been proportionately retarded as his mental growth had been accelerated, the higher development at the expense of the lower.

Whatever the agent of superior construction, Kaa bore its sign in brighter eye, in keener faculties, in slightly slimmer form, in a brow a shade fuller, a skull somewhat more elongated than the bullet-like cranium of his kind. He was the pride and wonder of his mother with his artistic, imaginative bents, and she was happy as he when the day of freedom came. Only in fear for his life had she protracted his imprisonment on the ledge. Now that he was strong enough and active enough to escape whatever danger might beset him below the ledge, O-Wa comprehended that a new and happier life was in store for each of them.

KAA was afraid when O-Wa told him that the tabu concerning the world below the ledge was lifted from the category of specific tabus. So many days had he dreamed of adventure on the plains below the ledge that the realization of those dreams was devastating in its consequent flood of joy and counter-flood of apprehension. He whacked his hands upon his legs; he jumped up and down. Several times he approached the fissure, only to shy away, like bashful swain on eve of osculation with his love. But O-Wa urged him on, adding solicitous injunctions concerning methods of descent and manner of deportment once he reached the foot of the steep cliff.

At last he dropped his legs over the edge and started down. Courage increased as he climbed lower and lower, with corresponding increase in speed of descent. Soon he was scrambling down the fissure far more swiftly than could O-Wa with her greater weight and lesser agility.

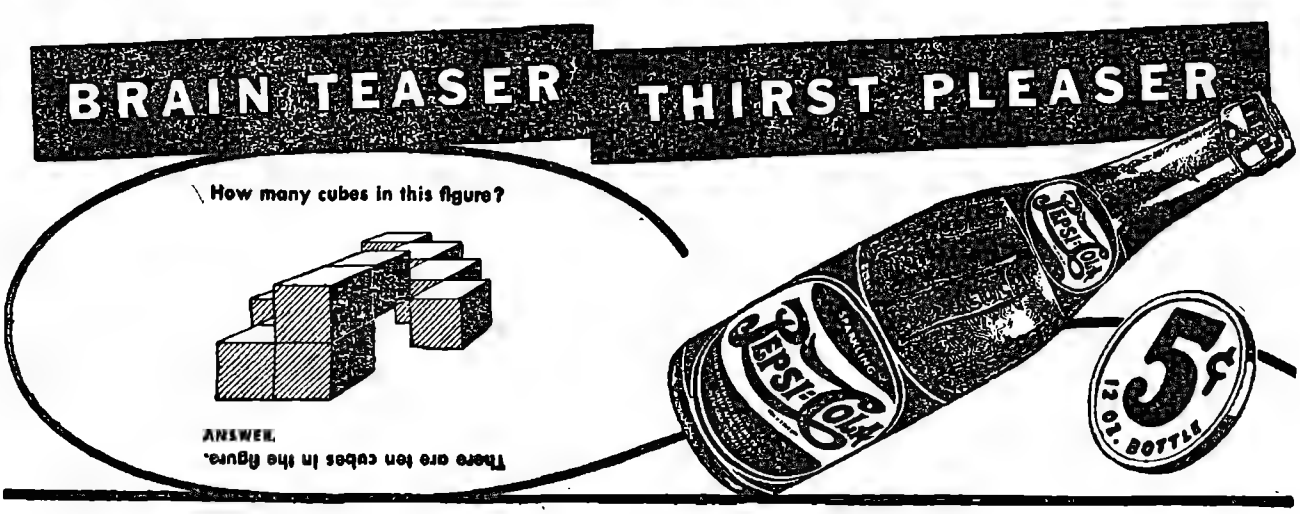
Watching Kaa's progress from the ledge, O-Wa was satisfied she had made no mistake in liberating him. He surely was in no need of her help in descending the fissure. Ag-Tar and his dogs of death must be swift, indeed, if they were to catch this slim, wild youth of the crags.

The liberation of Kaa did not deplete the constitution of specific laws. Instead, the repealing of one law signalled the drafting of two others. Kaa was not allowed to stray beyond a certain boundary away from the fissure-trail to the sunken ledge. Nor could he leave the ledge while O-Wa was below. While one fished or hunted stones, the other must be on the ledge, watching for hunters, or for prowling carnivora.

On his first venture to the ground, Kaa was severely punished for heading toward the open plain. He came to understand that his freedom, as freedom ever is, still was restricted by certain well-defined outposts. Beyond a huge boulder of basalt on the west he dared not venture, nor past a deep fumarole on the south, nor beyond the northern shore of the lake. He was disappointed that the plains were denied him. He longed to chase the tiny desert horses, play with their colts, and thrill by closer contact with the glyptodons and Goo-La, the bird-beast. Yet there was ample diversion to occupy many a day around the lake, and he soon became reconciled to his limitations.

WITH O-Wa always on watch from the ledge, Kaa gave himself over to wild orgies of leaping and running, rolling and stone-throwing. Tireless in enthusiasm, the young troglodyte pursued each whimsicality of his fertile imagination. He rolled the boulders from their ancient beds, examining with great care and lugubrious solemnity the creeping life thus unearthed. He dug up salamanders from their shallow burrows, hunted out nocturnal bats from secluded nook and cranny, loosing them in the sunlight, delighted almost to hysteria by the blundering flight of the day-blind mammals, who ever barely eluded collisions by some strange sixth sense.

He was a prodigious fisherman. Though O-Wa had tabued catching edible fish except to satisfy hunger, there was no tabu on the uneatable fish; for instance, the long, slender, prism-skinned alligator gars. These Kaa caught by dozens in the shallows until he nearly wiped out the species. However, the supply of fish could not have been completely exhausted except for a short time. The lake had an outlet which wound away across the plains, and up this



the finny denizens of the lake were often seen darting hither and thither in ceaseless wanderlust.

All this exercising of superenergy was part and parcel to the evolvement of O-Wa's plans for Kaa's future. She exulted in his swiftness of foot, his lightning quickness in catching fish by hand, his inordinate curiosity, his constant aggressiveness and amazing ingenuity. Here was embryonic power, an infant Titan for the instrumentation of revenge and justice. The laws of natural selection were adding steel to the already adamant mother-lode. Kaa rose to superior powers of survival by instinctive armament for the hard battle of a solitary existence.

And always the hate-idea was kneaded and mingled with the plastic clay of youth. By the sign of the bison he was taught to swear great vengeance upon Ag-Tar, the Old Man. He danced the dance of hate and splashed his blood upon the stone-effigy of Ag-Tar. By the tutelage of hate he acquired the positive traits of the male. Otherwise, he might have grown into the negative habits of the female, which sex was his sole companionship of kind.

"When the last teeth come you will slay Ag-Tar," O-Wa told him. "Then you will be Old Man of the tribe. Then the mother of you shall sit by you in the great barrow. All the hunters will make gachu for Kaa, the Old man. Kaa, the Old Man, will not kill the sick children and the old women. All will be good sign when Kaa is Old Man."

The idea of the last teeth was the only means she had of conveying to him the idea of maturity and the association of his death-oath with that maturity. Time was not estimated in years, though O-Wa was conscious that the annual rainy season divided certain periods of time, one of which seemed nearly equal to another. She did not know how old she was. Only by the coming of her wisdom teeth had she differentiated periods in her life, as such periods would sum her age. O-Wa's mother had taught her that childhood ended with the coming of the last teeth, the wisdom teeth, that from this time on she was no longer a *tapa* (girl), but a *bola* (woman). All this O-Wa illustrated to Kaa by sign words and by guiding his hand into her mouth so that he might feel her rearmost molars. By comparison he found that these particular teeth were missing in his own jaws. Thereafter, he formed a habit of looking for his "last teeth." He had the inherent desire of youth for maturity and the resultant superiority and increase of privilege innate in maturity.

Kaa learned, as best his mother could teach who knew so little, herself, of such things, the geography of the valley and the general location of the tribe of Ag-Tar. The *loo-ba sabu* (big bitter water) lay in the south, from which came the *loo-ka sabu* (long bitter water), the salt river winding the length of the valley to the sea. In the north were the *kok-ba* (big rocks)" where O-Wa never had been.

On the west were other *kok-ba*, similar to the *kok-ba* in which Kaa lived. It was vividly impressed on him that the tribe of Ag-Tar, from which he and his mother had sprung, and whose leader he was to be some day, had no permanent location, but that they usually could be found somewhere along the shores of the salt river, because of the advantageous ridges for excavation of barrows and because of the flint beds in the shallows of the stream. The questions Kaa asked were numerous and varied. Many of them O-Wa could not answer owing to her own ignorance, others she evaded in the all-embracing generality "woo-ga," which was explanatory of everything unknown under the sun.

FROM the first Kaa had had profound respect for the tall, ungainly birds that lived on the banks of the lake under the ledge. Not alone was this high esteem accounted for by the fact that they attacked him in a body, and gave him an unmerciful drubbing when he attempted to steal some of their eggs. Far deeper than that was the motive for his awe of the diving birds. For deep water ever had been tabu in the category of specific tabus. O-Wa had taught him to shun deep water as something rife with all the forms of death and the constituents of unmasterable peril.

Yet the diving birds had no consciousness nor observance of such a tabu. With impunity they plumbed the deepest holes in the lake, transcribing graceful arcs and curves far under water, leaving trains of frothy bubbles behind them. The diving birds had wisdom and capability beyond Kaa's wisdom and capability. Therefore they were worthy of deference and imitation.

In curiosity and grave puzzlement Kaa watched these solemn, long-billed sentinels of the lake. He observed how they cocked their heads in ceaseless scrutiny of the water, how they estimated the distance and depth of this fish and that, giving up

some, plunging swiftly and unerringly after others. There was something uncanny about it was his firm conviction. Here were birds homely and awkward on the land, without power to fly or run swiftly, yet in the water they were beautiful to behold and marvellously swift and sure of movement. Neither had they resemblance to fish, and, perforce, they breathed air and must sleep on land. Certain he was brother to each denizen of the wild, Kaa could not fathom why what was bagatelle for one should be death to another. If the diving birds hunted under water why could he not hunt under water?

Kaa soon scraped up close acquaintance with the birds, for as soon as they ascertained he was not after their eggs they were not in the least incensed at him nor shy of him. Never having been preyed upon by any life-form, the hesperorni were yet to learn fear of any member of the primeval brotherhood.

Squatting in the middle of a long row of the diving birds on the shelf of wet lava that extended out over the water on the north shore of the lake, Kaa, for hours, held mute controversy with his strange friends. With increasing assiduity he studied them, noting the manner in which they attained facility of propulsion both under water and on the surface.

To all appearances this propulsion was almost effortless, no matter how far down they dived, or what figures they inscribed in the crystal depths during pursuit of finny quarry. There seemed nothing difficult about it. They could dart several feet by the mere whipping back of webbed feet and tiny wings in a movement similar to broad-jumping on solid ground. Nor did the birds appear to suffer any discomfort from prolonged submergence, unless the hiss they sometimes emitted upon breaking the surface, after an exceptionally long period under water, signified distress of some vital organ.

Such observation eventually aroused in the ever-questing Kaa the association of his own legs with the feet of the diving birds and his hands with their wings, thence to the exciting idea that he, too, could swim and dive in the cool, deep water, catching fish by an infinitely more engaging method than snatching and grabbing in the shallows. Underlying and strengthening this growing proclivity for aquatic adventure was an innate fascination for deep water, and this, in turn, was intensified by the restrictions of his playgrounds, impelling abstraction of the last iota of amusement and sensation from whatever phenomena of life and Nature were represented.

But it was several weeks after Kaa felt strong inclination to mimic his feathered friends before he found courage actually to attempt entering the water at a depth over his head.

O-Wa was on the ledge as usual, and she could not see him owing to the intervening jut of the cliff. It was indispensable to his plans that his mother be kept in ignorance, for otherwise she would punish him severely for breaking tabu. However, he believed that, as he had been allowed to come down from the ledge upon developing the required strength to climb back speedily, so would the tabu of deep water be lifted if he demonstrated his ability to propel himself in it as did the diving birds.

POISED on the rock shelf, Kaa strove to gather suddenly awkward and useless arms and legs into a form similar to that assumed by the birds preliminary to diving. Even more difficult for him to attain was mastery over the still, small voice within him that piped insistently, "Woo-ga, woo-ga." Always when he forced himself to a muscular contraction calculated to precipitate him headfirst into the water, the still, small voice piped up and brought him back to a seesawing crouch on the slippery shelf, heart racing madly under the conflicting lashes of resolution and timidity.

But the law of averages came eventually to his aid, or to his woe, the viewpoint governing connotation of result. He could not forever retain precarious balance on the rock shelf while struggling between conscious desire and subconscious inhibition. His loss of balance was sudden and unexpected. His contorting struggles to save himself caused him to strike the water, not headfirst as he had planned, but upon his stomach. Habit and instinct made him writhe like a cat, endeavoring to land upon feet, or feet and hands, as he did when falling upon solid ground. The slap and shock he sustained knocked the wind out of him, and his shrill outcry of fear and despair was wholly stifled by a large mouthful of water.

He went down scarcely three feet, yet to him it seemed a frightful depth, from which it took all eternity to rise. Fighting the water with flailing arms and legs, he came up, choking and gasping, blind and frantic. Again he tried to cry out, but managed only a sputtering croak. Now

he saw with indubitable clarity the why of the deep water tabu. The proximity of death, the awful mystery, was his. The water-god had him tight in its fell clutches, and the water-god was rapidly strangling him. Madly he fought for breath and stable footing. Forgotten were the lessons of the diving birds. He had but one instinctive prompting, and that a futile one. It was to beat down the water to a solid footing by violent pounding. Through the dashing water he caught glimpses of rock shelf, cliff and the silent, interested diving birds.

The shore seemed very far away and unattainable. Yet, after the first plunge, he did not go down again. For he was closely akin to the wild, and had the life-tenacity of the wild. Though frightened, he had not the hysteria of fear which renders helpless in a similar predicament the advanced life-form, whose instincts are dimned and dissipated. His great physical endurance kept the threshing and pounding sufficiently vigorous and unweakening so that his head remained above water. And along with the water he was getting more and more air.

The resounding splash made by Kaa when he fell into the lake was heard by O-Wa. Though she could not see what had happened, she was well aware that no diving bird could have made such a loud noise. Her first thought was of Kaa, and she called to him once, a shrill bird-like signal. Hearing no answer, she leaped to the fissure, slid and scrambled down. Desperate splashing and blubbering instantly drew her attention to the deep water under the cliff bulge.

A wild screech of horror broke from her as she saw Kaa struggling there, out of reach of the bank. Tossing her arms in a despairing gesture, she dashed around the lake to the rock shelf, to the point nearest Kaa. The line of diving birds gave way before her, scattering this way and that, some taking to the water with startled squawks. But all O-Wa's violent antics availed her nothing. She dared not enter the deep water. There was no available stick long enough or strong enough with which to reach Kaa. In desperate impotence the mother beat her head and pulled her hair, uttering groans and wails of grief and woe.

BUT there came a change in the situation, which the diving birds helped to accomplish. As they whirled and dashed around Kaa, he was filled with new courage, as by the proximity of old friends succoring him with moral, if not physical support. Besides, he had almost cleared his lungs of water, and the lessening of his floundering, due to weariness, was allowing him a vastly clearer and cooler outlook. Furthermore, there was O-Wa on the bank, and she would punish him for breaking tabu. Granted she did not know his plunge had been caused by voluntary experiment, she would punish him nevertheless for carelessness. Then a new tabu would restrict the lake shore and its relativity to certain tragic accident.

His threshing and floundering grew more and more systematic as he began to economize energy. He took care to breathe when there was no water splashing into his mouth, and directed his efforts accordingly. Though coughing and choking in spite of himself, he managed to breathe with considerably more ease, in consequence of which he began to gain strength.

So far he had drifted only a little from where he had fallen in. A distance of possibly fifteen feet lay between him and the rock shelf. His aimless struggles had eventually turned him around, so that he faced the rock shelf. He now discovered that by pushing back in the water he could propel himself with something remotely resembling the facility of the diving birds. Cunning returned with increasing confidence. He must exonerate the breaking of the deep water tabu if he would escape the wrath of O-Wa. Presently, having stored up a slight reserve of oxygen, he called out:

"Sabu takuluk! Deep water is good!"

With a new lease on life, Kaa decided not to chance landing where his mother could lay hands on him. He doubted the duration of her sympathy once he was safe on land. So he made a floundering turn and set out for the bank opposite O-Wa. His progress was slow and labored, and it was not at first clear to O-Wa that he was moving at will. She ran around the lake to help him, but was again nonplused when Kaa promptly turned back and started for the rock shelf. He now was paddling quite steadily, breathing evenly with chin strained above the water.

O-Wa could not help but perceive that his actions were voluntary and premeditated. She became angry immediately. She began to scold and threaten without any effect on Kaa, other than to inspire him to call out more frequently his discovery that deep water was not indigenous with death.

After several futile trips around the lake, she at last subsided upon the rock shelf where the diving birds again had gathered and were enjoying the excitement. Here she muttered and motioned her vexation and quandary while Kaa crawled out on the other bank to rest.

This was the first instance in which Kaa had deliberately defied his mother. Being unable to catch him, she could not punish him for his defiance. She did not know what to do. The moment she got up and started around the lake, Kaa started for deep water. He had her completely beaten, beaten by a precocity of cunning which O-Wa never had dreamed of even in the adult male. And more astonishing than that cunning was the very evident fact that Kaa had attained an unprecedented ability, the ability to propel himself in water where he could not touch bottom.

The end of it was Kaa won. The tabu of deep water was rescinded from the category of tabus, and punishment was withheld for the breaking.

IT WAS directly due to his deep diving that he discovered the hole under the cliff below the surface of the lake where the rock and water coincided. Days before he had been impressed with the idea that fish came and went under the cliff at that point, and that the water must extend back a considerable distance. Determined to plumb the cavity and find out how far back it really did go, he dived and swam as far as he could and still retain enough air for the return trip. Several days successively he dove and swam into the shadowy hollow before he discovered its actual nature.

Literally, there proved to be no end to the cavity. It was the outlet to a cave formed by volcanic action and later submerged by the lake. The record underwater swim which revealed the secret to Kaa brought him to a sharp upward incline where his head popped out of the water in unfathomable blackness with a suddenness both amazing and alarming.

He could not at first believe he actually had broken out of the water, yet his groping hands encountered no resistance when he stroked. Then a whirring sound became audible and a soft, sharp-taloned body struck his head. He knew it was a bat and that bats lived in air. Quickly he let fly the impoverished air in his lungs and greedily sucked in a new supply. The air had a musty, sulphurous tang, but it was not altogether bad. He crawled cautiously on up the incline into a darkness that was so dense it seemed almost to have substance.

By feeling his way he discovered that he was in an oblong-shaped passage which led up and away from the finger of the lake out of which he had come. Along the floor trickled a steady stream of cold water which apparently supplied the lake. By comparison with the gloom of the cavern the outlet to the lake was clearly visible where the sunlight dimly filtered the depths from the outside.

Kaa's initial amazement and terror changed to thrilling delight at his find. Here was a new and tangible wonder of the unknown which deserved further exciting investigation. However, he made no attempt at this time to find out where the cavern led. Darkness was the bad sign, the sign for infinite caution, for it cloaked the action of the enemy that could see in the dark.

He had been in the cavern only a short time when he was seized with an overpowering depression, a sense of suffocation and horror of the unknown. His spine was tingling, his hair on end, when he dived with frantic haste for the patch of glimmering light that marked the underwater outlet. A few seconds later he came up puffing and blowing on the sun-sparkling surface of the lake, scarcely able to believe he had so recently been plunged in the blackness of darkest night.

AT LAST the day came when, casting caution to the four winds, he determined to find the end of the cave of the bats, if it had an end. Feeling his way along by hands and feet, listening for suspicious noises, and sensing, with that keenness of sense ever synonymous with the wild, whatever danger lurked ahead, he advanced. At first he waded in the rivulet that ran down the concave floor to the lake. But presently the rivulet came to an end in a sharp turn into the wall where the water vein which was its source had been tapped by the force that had hollowed out the passage.

Undaunted by the abrupt termination of his water guide, Kaa went on through the darkness, treading the dusts of centuries and breathing the stale stench of sulphur, instinctively dodging the invisible bats that occasionally neared him in their whirring flights.

Had there been branches to the passage, doubtless the adventurous youth would have been hopelessly confused and lost, to

die underground from privation and terror. But there proved to be no branches. The molten lava, which, ages before, had forced its way to the surface by that channel, had found no offshoots of strata as penetrable as the inlay first broken through. And so Kaa reached the end of the passage. First a finger of light, rapidly enlarging; then a yellow glare of light and of heat not wholly from the sun.

Half-blinded, Kaa stepped out into a stranger place by far than the cavern by which he had entered it. He had been climbing continually ever since leaving the underground spring, and, consequently, the source of the cave proved considerably higher than the lower terrace of cliffs where the plains began.

Eyes adjusted to the sudden flood of light, Kaa looked about him, wholly ignorant of the nature and significance of what he had blundered upon. It was a roughly circular amphitheater, possibly a quarter mile in diameter, with almost perpendicular walls, ranging from a height of a hundred to two hundred feet from foot to sky-crowned rim. The floor of the vast, well-like cavity was formed of cooled lava, honeycombed by fumaroles and hardened bubbles, frescoed by irregular cracks from which issued unbroken streamers of a hot, gaseous vapor, which dissolved and vanished almost immediately upon striking the upper air. Everywhere were deep scarifications and charred remnants of erupting lava. The walls were scorched red and black where the yearly rains and other decomposing agencies had not eroded them to the color tone of the basic rock. Every sign led to but one conclusion—that the earth once had spat its flaming breath through this gutted orifice, and, though there was nothing testifying to a recent eruption, according to the issue of the fissures the inferno of energy was not entirely dead, but merely sleeping.

KAA was quite at loss what to make of this unusual hollow in the surface of the earth. Bent on a more thorough inspection he stepped cautiously to one of the fissures and stooped to look into it. He got but a fleeting glimpse of the reddish, sulphur-rimmed depths before he was choked and blinded by the fetid breath of the underground furnace. Hastily backing away, he allowed the tears to flush out his eyes, while he coughed up what he could of the injurious fumes he had inhaled. Had he any idea of Purgatory he doubtless would then and there have been convinced that Satan, himself, had coughed in his face.

But fortunately Kaa had no knowledge of theology or geology by which to attach dread significance to the crater and the numerous signs of subdued activity. That it was an unique and forbidding place he was cognizant and duly impressed thereby. Avoiding the fissures and the offensive vapors they exhaled, he began circling the bottom of the crater, examining the walls for any sign of footholds for climbing, looking for caves similar to the one by which he had come. Numerous holes he found of various sizes and shapes in the igneous formations, but only two were large enough for exploration and these he did not enter, being more concerned with locating a scalable section of the wall.

He found what he was looking for on the south side. A landslide had formed an approach of detritus at the foot of the precipice. Above this the sheer rock had been deeply scarred and chipped by falling boulders. Also, the rim of the crater where the slip had originated was deeply indented, thus decreasing the height of the wall at that point.

Wading up the loose talus slope, he began a perilous ascent of the wall, determined to see what was beyond the rim. Taking advantage of each hollow and nodule, he progressed slowly but surely, sometimes clinging by fingers and toes alone. For more than fifty feet he climbed almost straight up, feeling rather than seeing his way. Only once he looked down, narrowly escaping a mortal fall as a result of the vertigo experienced, which was partly due to the slightly asphyxiating fumes from below. After that he hugged the wall, looking only above or at the face of the rock a few inches from his eyes. At length he reached the massive gash where the rim had broken off and fallen into the bottom of the crater. Here the going was much easier, and in no time he panted to the rim.

A vast, barren land stretched on every side. Here and there were other conical formations similar to that from which he had climbed. For several miles north and south these ancient craters ranged in an irregular ridge, parallel to the valley rim on the west.

Shading his eyes with one hand Kaa surveyed the oceans of lava. There was no vegetation in sight—only the endless acres of serrated, age-hardened volcanic mud and agglomerate, flanking the low craters. The dominant color was brownish red, but

there were sections black with basalt and dry lakes of a greyish speckled hue covered the lowest places. Three large birds were flapping across the wastes toward the valley, and these were the only signs of life Kaa saw.

It was a depressing and lonely desert of desolation. Kaa was keenly disappointed. New life he had sought, but the antithesis of life he had found. Here was a spacious tomb, a great, gloomy mausoleum of the Universe where billions of life-forms in embryo lay in eternal petrefaction and fusion, yet to Kaa it meant less than nothing. Here was the gigantic nightcap of a sleeping Titan, who buried cities and entire nations in his working hours, but of that Kaa could have no intimation, nor did he obtain the slightest import from it.

He turned away, back to the crater rim and began the tedious, perilous descent. Already he had growing nostalgia for O-Wa and the diving birds, for the cool caress of the lake and for the many other characteristics of the home-barrow. He had no stomach for further ventures in the graveyard above the crater rim.

By his footprints in the time-powdered dust of the crater he found his way back to the proper passage, and from there on he could not go wrong in his return to the lake outlet. It was not his intention ever to visit the crater again, yet over his predestinations he could have no control.

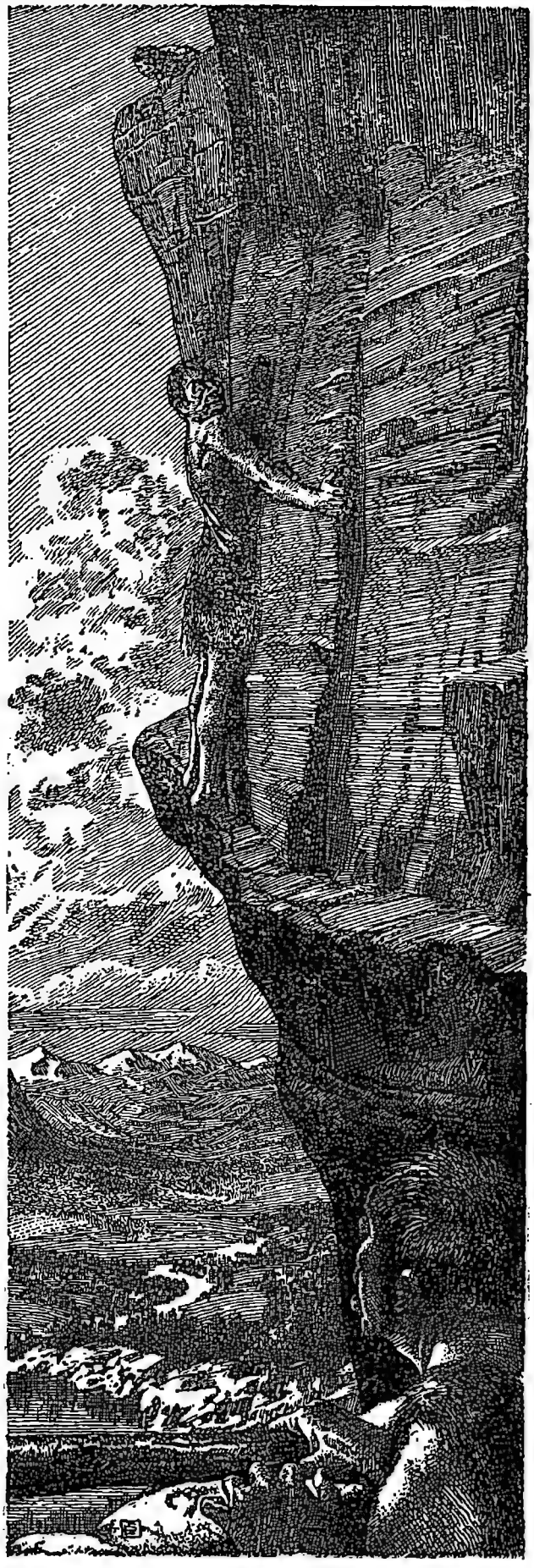
CHAPTER V

THE DARK MOON

FOR nearly an hour O-Wa had lain there on the ledge watching the slow progress of two glyptodons across the focus of her perspective. It was the tropic springtime and all life was on the move, restless, adventurous.

She, too, knew that stirring pang of longing. In the air she scented it, in beast and bird she saw it exemplified, and in her heart she comprehended it.

More than seven years now she had been in hiding in the cliff and during all that time she had seen but three of her kind, and these from a long distance. And she was young. Against the voiceless murmuring she was ill-equipped to resist. It was not in her nature to resist. Far off in the jungle was the harsh voice and heavy hand of him who roared his love song to the wide world in pride of strength and perfect joy of living. Yet to Eros she could not be fair Calypso. Reason



Quietly he gathered himself for the awful plunge

forbade—reason, the intangible quality which was her differentiation from the beast.

Ag-Tar, the Old Man, did not forget, and where man was there was Ag-Tar. She must wait a little longer until Kaa, the Unnamed, reared in the tutelage of hate, took up the battle in which Ka-Mot, his father, had fallen. Kaa was strong, swift and wise beyond all wisdom she ever had known. And Ag-Tar was growing older.

With youth, cunning and the good sign of Dong-Ga the son of Ka-Mot would crush the indomitable Ag-Tar. Then her loneliness would be at an end.

The muffled plunge of Kaa in the lake startled O-Wa from her reverie. Never would she be altogether at ease while knowing that Kaa played in the tabu deep water. This aping of Nuk-Pu, the fish, was too great a contradiction of all the laws of life prolongation for her to accept it unreservedly.

Association of impendent peril with Kaa vivified still another anxiety of the moment. It was the dark phase of the moon, beginning with the preceding night, a period of unquestioned ill-omen. She must warn Kaa, impress upon him the gravity of the bad sign, so that he could govern his actions thereby, undertaking nothing upon which hazard attended. Especially would this apply to the deep water.

Raising her head, she emitted a thin, piercing cry. It was an imitation of a species of bird that nested in the cliffs, used purposely in long-distance signalling in order to deceive any wandering hunter that might happen to overhear it. Bending over the parapet, she looked down on that portion of the lake visible beyond the bulge of the cliff.

Wide ripples were flowing out from a moving body. These quickly were followed by the shining black hair of the swimmer on his way to answer the signal. O-Wa observed the change in Kaa's movements as he touched bottom with his feet and began wading. Through the shallows he ploughed to shore, body glistening with countless sun-fired water drops. In a series of long, sportive leaps he sped to the fissure and started up, climbing with the rapidity and facility of a monkey. There was no sound of his coming save for the faint spat of wet hands and feet on the worn footholds, for he had well learned the lessons of stealth in the tutelage of love and its advanced concentrate, the tutelage of hate.

WHEN Kaa debouched upon the ledge his first move was to make the sign of obeisance before the skull of the bison. From that he turned directly to the scarred and blood-stained etching of Ag-Tar and raked the nails of either hand across it with an accompanying imprecation. These ceremonies completed, he gave his full attention to O-Wa.

"Kaa comes," he said simply, by tapping his breast and moving the other hand upward in a short arc. He was not quite eight years of age at this time, yet he was nearly five feet tall. Though the expansive biceps of maturity were several years away, he was indubitably well-knit and promising of fine physical stature in the limitations of his kind. Swimming and diving had added a grace and symmetry to his form which under ordinary conditions of development he should not have attained.

"The moon is not in the sky," said O-Wa in the sign language. "It is the bad time. The hunters do not go far from the barrows. In the dark of the moon the deep water is very bad sign."

"In the dark of the moon the birds fish in deep water," contended Kaa in gutturals which he was adept at combining into clear expressions without the aid of signs. "The birds know that the dark moon makes not the deep water tabu."

"Woo-ga, the dark moon," insisted O-Wa. "Woo-ga, the deep water."

Kaa squatted resignedly and looked off over the plains where the pair of glyptodons were stirring the dust in a ponderous attempt at gamboling. For a short time he remained meditatively silent while O-Wa resumed her tireless scrutiny of that portion of her sequestered world from which danger might be expected.

"The good fish are fewer in the lake," Kaa reported presently. "We must go the long way where the fish are many."

"We will eat the snails and the green things that can not walk," replied O-Wa. "We can not go the long way. Many times the big water comes from the sky before we go the long way."

"I wish to hunt Ya-Ya and Se-Ka," urged Kaa. "Do not all the he-children hunt? But I can not hunt here."

"When come the last teeth of you we will go the long way," concluded O-Wa with finality.

"Woo-ga, Ag-Tar when the last teeth come!" he exclaimed in the rotelike intonation of a pagan reciting a litany before his clay idol. Moved by suggestion he reached eagerly into his mouth and felt

behind his molars. The eagerness faded when he withdrew his fingers. As yet there was no sign of the coveted wisdom teeth. He must resign himself to another long period of waiting. Days were as years to him. He could not understand why growth was so slow.

"Why do we not make the fire with the spark-stones?" he interrogated after a bit. "Ag-Tar is far away. He will not see the smoke. He has forgotten O-Wa and Kaa."

"When come the last teeth of you," reiterated O-Wa, somewhat viciously as her hate for Ag-Tar flamed up. "We can not make the fire. The hunters see the smoke a long way. The Old Man does not forget. He looks for Kaa and the mother of Kaa."

"Woo-ga, Ag-Tar," he snarled with a fierce grimace. "In the dark I see Ag-Tar behind the eyes of me. He comes to kill O-Wa and the son of O-Wa. Then I awake and Ag-Tar is gone."

He did not know how nearly his words had come to a prophecy.

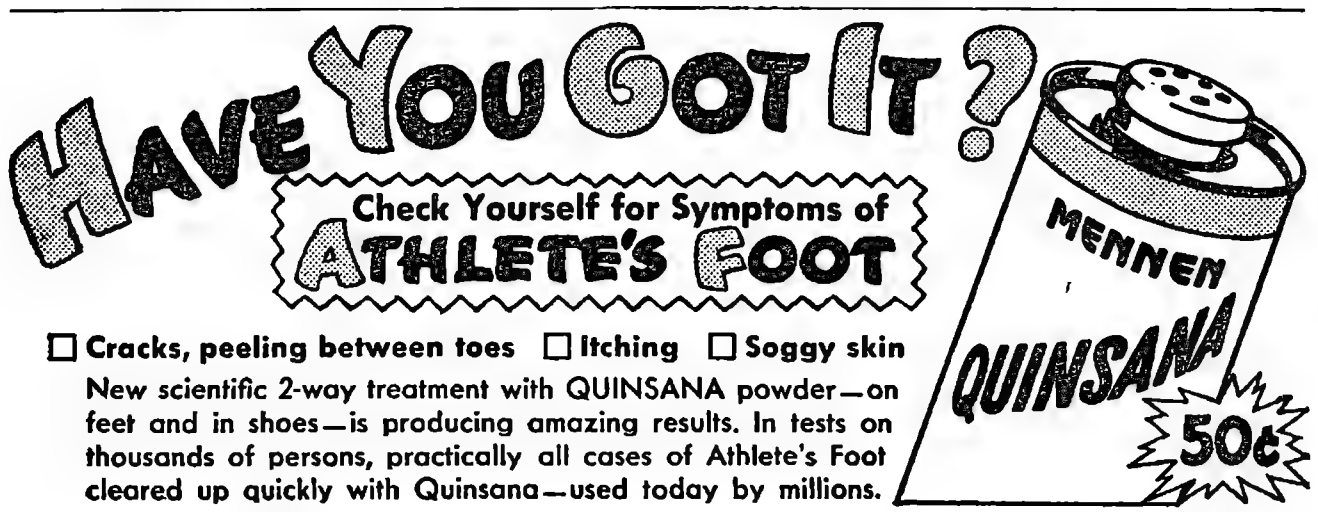
IT WAS just at dawn two days later when the tragedy occurred. Kaa was on the ledge putting an edge on a fragment of black chert. O-Wa was below, hunting snails among the rocks at a distance of possibly fifty yards from the lake but within the boundaries of the restricted area. She seemed wholly engrossed in her quest. Occasionally, from force of habit, Kaa lifted his head from his work and scanned the plains, ever vigilant, though hardly conscious of what he watched for so long had he and O-Wa been unmolested in their secluded refuge. He could not see his mother, and the fact that she might be in danger never was farther from his wandering mind.

Then came the rude awakening. The deep silence of the cliff retreat was shattered by a scream of terror from below. Kaa had never before heard such a terrible mouth noise from his mother. Only the sheer imminency of death could have put such agony of fright into her voice. He was transfixed. A split-second he sat there over the fragment of chert, stone hammer half-raised, spine tingling, skin chilled and quivering. Then, just as he leaped to the parapet, a strident beast-like roar grated on the air. It was a timbre of voice Kaa never would forget. He looked down, body trembling like that of a horse awaiting the blow of angry master.

O-Wa was running toward the fissure-trail, grimly silent after her first scream in a desperate effort to increase her speed. One stride behind her came a terrible figure whose identity was indelibly wrought in the memory-pictures of the brown boy. It was Ag-Tar, the Old Man!

Three adult males had risen from the rocks and were running to cut off O-Wa from the fissure. But there proved to be no need for such interception. One long, sinewy arm stretched out, and the Old Man's heavy club inscribed a hooklike arc. Followed a dull thud as the weapon encountered its objective, and O-Wa was knocked sprawling, the impetus of her flight rolling her over and over for several feet. Silent and vengeful, the Old Man leaped after her, stopped and bent over the feebly jerking body. Once, twice, the heavy club rose and fell upon a huddled brown thing in a widening crimson stain.

A long-drawn broken cry burst unbidden from Kaa's lips, quavering from throaty moan to high falsetto, like the howl of a dog over human dead. The Old Man looked up as the weird, sad sound broke out. He shook his club at the slim figure leaning over the parapet, and with vicious emphasis he made the death sign.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The wail of mourning broke off as suddenly as it had commenced. The Old Man's threat had wrought the sudden change. Kaa had learned the superficialities of hate, but now he experienced the profundities of hate. The two sources fused in a flame of vindictive savagery that had no equal even in the beast heart of the Old Man. A rasping snarl, rising and deepening to the beginning of a roar, superseded the wail of grief as Kaa poured out defiance and invective upon the slayer of O-Wa. He tore his hair and beat his breast in the dance of hate.

He began running back and forth along the ledge in a frenzy. For minutes Kaa was blind with the inebriety of raging abandon. But the tantrum soon was over. The necessity for self-protection acted as an efficacious cooling medium. Snatching up a handful of stones he began to pelt Ag-Tar and the hunters. One stone struck the Old Man a stinging impact on the shoulder while his head was turned in signing for his men to climb the fissure. The Old Man bellowed with pain, ducked his head under his arms and ran the gauntlet of missiles to the base of the cliff where Kaa could not reach him because of the intervening jut of the ledge.

THE moment Ag-Tar was out of range Kaa leaped to the fissure and began stoning the climbing hunters. The volley stopped them only a few feet from the ground, and the uppermost received a stunning wound on the head. He began to slip down, whereupon the man underneath, to avoid being forced from his precarious footing, butted the body over his head. The stricken hunter landed in a heap at the bottom of the fissure where he lay for several minutes before he was able to totter to his feet.

But the ever scheming Ag-Tar conceived of a way to stop that deadly barrage from the ledge. He dashed away from the base of the cliff to a point beyond range of Kaa's throwing arms, and soon located a lodge of crumbled, glassy lava ash. These chunks the Old Man commenced to throw at the ledge in a steady stream. Not once did he miss. Each stone whizzed into the yawning vent comprising the sunken ledge, bounding and ricocheting from roof, floor and parapet. To escape the deadly shower Kaa was forced to crouch down behind the parapet. In this position he was unable to throw with any accuracy or velocity. Besides, his supply of ammunition was running low.

Kaa could hear the labored breathing of the hunters as they climbed higher and higher up the fissure, taking full advantage of the recess in the pebble fusillade. All the while Ag-Tar hurled a steady stream of whining projectiles into the ledge, filling it with flying, glancing fragments of knife-edged lava cinders.

With the hunters almost to the ledge there remained but one way open to escape, the narrow vein of quartz leading from the north end of the ledge around the face of the cliff to the top of the terrace.

Yet for Kaa to expose himself out upon the bare rock was certain death as long as Ag-Tar was in position for accurate and effective throwing. Only one of those hurtling half-pound cinders would have shaken even the strongest man from that six-inch plinth and its paucity of handholds.

Kaa was snarling now with all the ferocity and whetted acumen of the animal in the jaws of death. He glared down through the interstices of the parapet, trying to time the Old Man's throwing so as to get a good start on the plinth while his enemy was hunting for ammunition. But there seemed a plethora of lava fragments. Kaa despaired of ever getting away from the ledge, and he prepared himself for a last stand at the head of the fissure-trail.

Then the Old Man played unwittingly into the plans of the fugitive. Thinking the nonappearance and silence of Kaa signified that one of his cinders had inflicted a mortal wound, Ag-Tar ceased throwing and started for the fissure to follow up his hunters as they closed in. Kaa's opportunity had come. In a swift, sliding crawl he made for the plinth.

Cautiously feeling his way for all his mad desire for haste, fingers and toes sensitized almost to the keenness of an insect's antennæ or a cat's whiskers, he pulled himself out upon the narrow rim and arose to an erect position, his body pressed closely to the rock. Slowly he began edging along as years before O-Wa had done in testing that perilous getaway. Foot by foot he proceeded. He heard the hunters' yells of rage as they reached the sunken ledge and found their quarry gone. Death was behind, death below, if he fell. But the danger of falling was dwarfed by the living peril that threatened from the ledge. He was deadly quiet now, with the calm that cloaks the inner tempest. He caught the dull glint of water below as he looked down across his body and under

one upreaching, groping arm. The lake looked infinitely small so far down, almost like a puddle.

SLOWLY he crept on. He reached the outermost bulge of the convex escarpment, looked up and came to a sudden, trembling stop. A wholly unexpected menace from a different quarter confronted him. There was no sound attendant upon it, yet when he looked along the wall toward the point where the quartz vein and rim intersected, he saw it only too vividly—the fierce face of a hunter waiting at the top of the plinth, looking down from a position on hands and knees. Alongside that face was a heavy stone axe, swinging suggestively as the great hand that clutched it flexed and reflexed in preparation for a coming blow.

Kaa made no outcry. He was beyond experiencing any greater magnitude of fear. Midway between the ledge he had abandoned and the top of the terrace he clung uncertainly. His seething brain, tuned by danger to a high degree of clarity, flashed swiftly to but one conclusion. Since he could not go back, forward, or up, he must go *down*. And immediately, as he pressed his forehead against the rock to look along his body, he saw the lake!

He never had dived from a high point. Not that he could not have done so, but the idea never had been suggested to him by situation or association. Now he had both suggestion and association; further, he had dire necessity and the required elevation, a hundred feet of it. Besides, he had progressed to a point directly over deep water. His life depended upon his addition of high diving to his other aquatic accomplishments. Carefully he gauged the distance, straining his head this way and that, avoiding any sudden moves or contortions that would disturb his precarious equilibrium on the plinth. The jut of the cliff was the greatest danger. If he struck the rock on the way down he would instantly be crushed. Yet even more certainly would he meet such a fate if he allowed Ag-Tar to lay hands on him, or if he attempted to fight his way to the top of the terrace where the hunter was on guard with the stone axe.

A slight sound, the rustle of naked skin on bare rock; attracted Kaa's attention back the way he had come. Ag-Tar had stepped out on the plinth and was slowly advancing. The Old Man's leering countenance, tense with triumph and blood lust, was ample incentive for Kaa to hasten in taking advantage of his last long chance for escape. Quietly he gathered himself for the plunge, from habit drawing himself up to a position of diving as well as he could on such inadequate footing. It did not occur to him to whirl and jump feet first in order to insure his safety from the jut of the cliff. Such logic was beyond him. He must somehow strike the water head down, for that was the way the diving birds did it, and they had taught him how to dive.

Drawing a deep breath, he made the sign of the bison on the stone over his head and gave himself a quick shove off the rock as he toppled backward. His legs helped hurl him away from the cliff, at the same time flipping him in a sidelong somersault. With feline agility he writhed in midair, partly righting himself as he shot down to the pool a hundred feet below.

In the eyes of the astonished hunters he was no more than a hazy streak of bronze as he shaved the outermost bulge of the cliff by less than a foot. The sharp snarl of the Old Man sounded almost simultaneously with the heavy plunge of Kaa's body in the deep water of the lake. A foamy fountain lifted slowly around the vanishing hole and quickly settled in a pattering shower.

Silent and tense, somewhat overawed by the daring plunge, Ag-Tar and his hunters watched the agitated water for the reappearance of Kaa. But it was a vain vigil. No struggling figure in the throes of death by drowning came to the surface of the deep water. By no stretch of the imagination could Ag-Tar or his men have surmised the truth—that the slim body of the cliff boy was at that very moment gliding back under the precipice on which they were situated, swimming easily, with long, sweeping strokes. Nor could they have remotely conjectured the nature of the impenetrable refuge which the under-water swimmer eventually reached and crawled into.

THE Old Man shuffled back along the plinth to the ledge. It was his conviction that Kaa had been frightened into committing suicide. Gruffly he ordered the hunters to follow him below. They tumbled eagerly own the fissure and hurried to the shore of the lake where the quarry had vanished. They firmly believed they would see a body floating somewhere in the crystal depths, for they could not conceive of one of their kind sustaining himself in water, much less a slim stripling accom-

plishing such a feat. The longer they looked the more intent they became upon solving this astounding mystery. The Old Man signalled the hunter on top the cliff to join them in the search, whereupon the man began to run north along the rim back to the point where he had been able to ascend the precipice.

By this time Ag-Tar was not only deeply chagrined but increasingly dumbfounded and somewhat suspicious and dubious. With his own eyes he had seen the condemned man-child fall a hundred feet headfirst into the lake. With his own ears he had heard the sound of the plunge, and he had seen the leaping of displaced water. Yet Kaa, the Unnamed, had vanished. Nowhere in those crystal depths, where idled the alligator gars and ganoids, was there so much as a trace of the body. Only the ungainly diving birds cocked their heads wisely at Ag-Tar and the others, blinking velvety black eyes that were lugubriously knowing.

"Woo-ga," grunted one of the hunters at last.

"Ai-ee, woo-ga," snarled Ag-Tar.

The hunter from the top of the cliff now came running up, and in spite of guttural expostulations as to the fruitlessness of further search, the newcomer had to see for himself. The Old Man sullenly decided to join the hunter in one last exhaustive effort to ravel this mysterious disappearance which smacked of moon magic. He waded out into the lake up to his armpits, though his heart quailed within him at the chill of the water rising around his torso. He returned rather hastily without having come any closer to a definite clue.

Bitter, indeed, was Ag-Tar's acceptance of defeat, for it was defeat since the visible body of the condemned man-child was not in evidence. Even in this age there was that strange illusion of suicide cheating justice when it precedes the death sentence of man's penal equity. But not alone was Ag-Tar disgruntled because a life had slipped through his bloody hands. One of his most painfully devised plans had failed. Two days before, a scouting hunter had reported the location of the long missing O-Wa and the unnamed man-child, whom for many years he had vainly sought by sending out searching parties and by expeditions under his personal supervision whenever he could spare the time away from the tribe.

He had received with great exultation the news of the sighting of the rebel. The same day he had made a forced march through the jungle and across the plains, coming up within half a mile of the terrace. Here he had hidden himself and his four hunters while he carefully examined the terrain and the peculiarities of the fugitives' stronghold. Then he had contrived a trap that would eliminate any possibility of a long chase. He had even detoured and climbed the first terrace, discovering the quartz vein that led to the sunken ledge. Here he had posted a hunter, comprehending that an attempted surprise from the plinth would be too dangerous. Then, during the night he had crawled up among the boulders around the lake with the three remaining hunters. He had observed that O-Wa and Kaa never were on the ground together, but he would overcome the first one that left the ledge at dawn, having but one left to contend with on the ledge. So he had, but Kaa had rent the meshes of his prize scheme, and in consequence he was extremely upset.

"It is the dark of the moon," mumbled Ag-Tar in self-exoneration. "In the dark moon is the bad time to hunt."

Stubborn to the last the Old Man held his now thoroughly scared hunters on the shore of the lake in the hope that by some unknown phenomenon the body had been detained in an invisible grotto under water from which it would in time extricate itself and rise to view. When he finally turned away from the lake Ag-Tar, himself, was darting suspicious glances behind him, starting at every whir of wings or plunge of diving bird. However, pride gave him courage to order a halt at the body of O-Wa. He raised his hands in the sign of attention.

"This is the sign," he said. "Ag-Tar does not forget. The law of Ag-Tar can not be broken. Uncha!"

The hunters had wheeled and started toward the plains before Ag-Tar's command to move was quite pronounced. Under any other circumstances Ag-Tar probably would have severely disciplined his subjects for such prevenience. However, the Old Man also felt the awful solemnity of the barren cliff and silent lake where O-Wa had been slain, and where the water did not give up its dead.

Ag-Tar's superstitions might not have been the only cause for the ghostly dread experienced when he turned his back upon the scene of the execution and the vanishment. Doubtless, he sensed telepathically the gleaming eyes that broke the surface of the lake at its juncture with the cliff, peering after him with burning hate.

WITH only eyes, ears and nose revealed above water Kaa looked and listened from his position clinging to the cliff at the point where the water washed against it. Here he had swum after a period of tense waiting in the darkness of the cave retreat. He had seen the departure of Ag-Tar and the males, but he feared treachery, being fully aware of the Old Man's cunning so vividly demonstrated by the trap set for him and his mother. Therefore was he inordinately cautious in coming out of hiding.

For many minutes he hung there, almost entirely submerged, unable to decide upon a definite move. That Ag-Tar had given him up for dead he could not quite understand, nor could he suspect what a fright his vanishing in the lake had incited in the superstitious minds of the males. Though he could neither hear nor see any sign of the enemy, yet he doubted the reality of his good fortune. He strongly suspected they were hiding in the rocks, and were waiting for him to come out of the water.

Quite suddenly, as ideas were likely to pop into his head, Kaa recalled the crater at the eastern end of the cave. From the rim of the crater he could come down across the lava beds to the valley rim, and from there climb down to the top of the lower terrace where, without danger to himself, unless a male still was on watch above, he could easily locate any one hiding in the rocks around the lake. And if a male were on watch on top of the terrace he would come up behind him with all the advantage of a complete surprise.

All this he did not grasp quickly, but by painfully persevering until he had detached and tabulated each association of the basic idea. When at last he had it all in mind he delayed no longer, but sank silently and swam back to the entrance of the cave. Here he retraced his steps of nearly a year before.

Emerging from the pitchy blackness of the cave into the glaring light and heat of the crater bottom, he found few material changes in the place. The fissures still exuded the hot, acrid vapor; the walls still frowned down on all sides in charred and serrated denudity. Only the landslide he found to have been somewhat enlarged by a fresh cave-in, making the climb to the rim shorter than it had been when first he had accomplished it under the spur of mere curiosity. Also, he was considerably stronger than when he had first visited the place and could climb correspondingly faster and with less effort. All in all the crater was not nearly so repellent now that it served a definite and worthy purpose.

Upon reaching the rim he studied the topography until he believed he had a clear concept of the course he must pursue if he would eventually arrive at a point directly or nearly above the lake. Swiftly he set off across the lava beds that sloped away on all sides as far as he could see. Never had he dreamed the time would come when he would find it necessary to venture upon that desolate, forbidding waste, yet his mind was too much occupied by the turbulent interchange of grief and hate to register the emotional effect of his surroundings.

IT WAS hardly a half mile to the highest terrace of the cliffs forming the valley rim, and Kaa covered the distance in a few minutes in spite of perilous footing. A drop of nearly a thousand feet now lay between him and his objective. Far away and below he could see the plain, scarcely distinguishable from the faint purplish haze that hung over it. Running along the top of the cliff he soon located a section which promised footholds for a reasonably safe descent, and in a moment he was over the edge and going down.

In a half hour he reached the summit of the lower terrace.

Caution and stealth came into play as he crawled to the rim, watching on all sides for a sentinel, and reassured when he failed to discern such a menace. Thus he reached the edge and slowly raised his head until he could see below. He clearly made out part of the lake somewhat to the right of his position, recognizing the familiar forms of the scattered boulders. Among them lay the body of his mother. He had had a dim hope that O-Wa would return to life, that she was merely stunned or shamming. But when he saw her lying there exactly as she had fallen, he knew she slept the long sleep from which there was no waking. And, too, several birds of prey had begun circling quite low over the corpse, added evidence that O-Wa no longer signified a living mechanism, but merely so much meat, having the one utility of meat.

The gruesome threat of the carrion birds increased Kaa's anxiety concerning his mother and her exposed condition. He could not endure the idea of seeing her eaten by the birds. Deep in him was a cringing from being eaten, and from al-

lowing his kind to be eaten. His instincts were none of the perversions of the debased cannibal.

Scanning the vicinity of the lake once more, still unable to see any sign of lurking hunters, he struggled between an impulsion to hasten down and protect his mother from the birds and a precautionary prompting to beware of a trap. Fretting and fuming, he watched a little longer, growing steadily more certain that Ag-Tar and his males really had departed for the jungle, though no sign of them was to be seen on the plains, they having long since gotten out of sight of the lower terrace. Yet, confident as he was in his eyesight, cold fear gripped him when he started toward the plinth that led to the ledge. In his ears rang continually the blood-curdling, triumphant whoop of the males and the Old Man.

But at last he mastered his fear, urged on by the fact that one of the carrion birds had alighted beside the body of O-Wa and was waddling around it in ever narrowing circles. Up he raised and screamed his rage at the birds, breaking off brittle cinders of lava to throw at the malefactors. But the huge, skin-winged vultures paid no attention to the cinders. It was too long a range for so small a target.

Emboldened, as his shouting and throwing raised no hunters, Kaa speedily let himself over the edge of the terrace to the quartz vein and began the tedious, dangerous trip to the ledge, his only means of getting below at that point unless he desired to repeat his high dive, which he did not, for he was bathed with cold perspiration at the thought. He hurried as much as he dared, yet it seemed an interminable time before he at last reached the ledge. From there on it was but the work of minutes to get down the fissure.

Fear of Ag-Tar entirely vanished when Kaa felt the level footing of the lake environs underfoot. With a snarl of rage he flung himself upon the vultures, driving them away with blows of fist and showers of invective. When the last of them was wheeling away he bent over O-Wa's body, glaring about in vindictive challenge of whatever life-form might harbor malicious designs upon his beloved dead.

THERE was no answer to Kaa's challenge, and after a few moments he looked down at his mother in deep sorrow. All the hours she had wrestled with him and talked with him came back in thronging memory phantoms. In him was the matrix of sentiment, though the gem was far from polished. He knew an excruciating ache, an association of things gone by with that which was no more.

Wonderingly he passed one hand over the blood-damp hair that was gnarled over the still face. The ache increased as he noted the clammy chill of the skin which had warmed him throughout the years of his babyhood. Repressed feeling slowly rose in his throat as it struggled to be freed in expression of some sort. Instinctively, he lifted his face to the morning sky. In the sky was the unknown, vast and incommunicable. There was no easement upon the earth, therefore must there be easement in the unknown of which the sky was the greatest exemplification.

Once more, as he had when the club of Ag-Tar descended, Kaa poured forth his quavering wail of grief, poignant, supplicant, vocalized by laryngeal expansions and contractions identical with those of the howling giant wolf and the caterwauling sabre-tooth. Rising on the peak of breath exhalation, it subsided to a sobbing whisper as the lungs were emptied. Again he breathed and sang his song of death, while pleading eyes plumbed the infinite for the comfort of the all-seeing and deathless.

Knowing naught of his Maker, he yet looked up to his Maker in his hour of sore tribulation. It was the way of all mourning life, crying its sadness to the sky when deity of flesh has failed and crumbled in the unalterable weakness of mere flesh. Alike, wolf, priest and poet lift their faces to the infinite in puny struggle to overreach the clay, and the hurt and decadence of the clay. And as all must fail in that unachievable transition, so Kaa failed. He spent his grief; he bared his soul and prayed his wordless prayer, but when all the crying and sighing were done the brown body lay there voiceless and cold as before, immutable in its certitude of decay as the age-old ashes upon which it reposed. Nor was the ache in the breast of the mourner gone, though it was more endurable. Time alone could completely assuage the aftermath of tragedy.

When Kaa arose from the side of the body he was resolved to face the inevitable. There was no other normal course of decision, for life was strong in him with all the determination to live and outlive which is innate in youth. He was too much in doubt regarding a future life to join O-Wa in the long sleep.

His first definite move was for means of permanently protecting O-Wa from the birds of prey. In the tutelage of love she had told him how the tribe sometimes carried its dead into unused barrows, the entrances of which were afterward blocked with stones. Likewise, he would have preferred interring O-Wa on the ledge where were all the associations of her living years, and where she would be high above the plain beyond the tampering of man, beast, or bird.

But his efforts to carry the body up the fissure were fruitless. He was not nearly strong enough to handle a weight so much heavier than himself, especially under the circumstances of such a precipitous climb. So he was required to compromise with desire and limitations. In the end he decided upon a fumarole, not far from the lake. In the center of the cone was a diminishing hole, large enough at the mouth to admit the body of an adult, and the adamant lava in which it was formed would be ample protection against any digging or scratching animal.

HALF-dragging, half-carrying the body to the fumarole, he thrust it in, feet first, until only the head and shoulders were visible at the point where the hole widened into an irregular funnel. This accomplished, he bethought himself of the intimate appurtenances of O-Wa's living self which were inextricably associated with her even in death. To Kaa, O-Wa's stone axe also was dead, and the shells with which she had sometimes amused herself. Also part and parcel of the living, therefore of the dead, was the skull of Dong-Ga, the good sign. All these things he brought down and deposited in the fumarole with O-Wa, along with several stone knives and skin scrappers.

The bison skull proved to be considerable of a problem, and he left it till the last.

By dint of much labor he lugged the skull halfway down the fissure. Then the long horns stuck fast between the rocks. In his effort to jerk it free, he lost his grip at the instant the horns broke loose. The skull almost knocked him from his footing as it bounded down the cliff and struck the lava at the foot of the fissure, with resounding crack of horn and dry bone. The accident was somewhat unnerving, for Kaa was thoroughly superstitious concerning the skull and its significations. He scrambled down the fissure and cautiously approached the somewhat shattered shell. Upon finding that it in nowise offered to harm him in revenge for the fall, he took hold of one horn and dragged it to the fumarole.

Kaa now proceeded to seal the hole with carefully wedged stones, upon which he placed the bison skull, seating it securely by a second layer of closely fitted stones. Thus the grave was completed.

All was over. O-Wa lay safe from desecration in the long sleep. If she lived again in that strange world Kaa associated with sleeping dreams, then she would have axe, knife and play-shells ready to her hands. Also, Dong-Ga, the good sign, would be near to continue her good fortune, the only break in which had been caused by the periodically stronger bad sign of the dark moon.

STANDING there by the tomb, Kaa was assailed by greater loneliness than he ever had known. Never had he suspected how much O-Wa had meant to him, until now that she was gone. And because he was alone, without friends or relatives to sympathize, he experienced a deeper sense of desolation than was common to his kind in their bereavements. Now he was truly an exile and pariah, with no confidant, no protector, nor anything to protect save himself, without a tutor to guide him in the world of the wild that pressed about him on every side with its mocking, mirthless laughter of infallibility.

He knew not what to do, which way to turn. When O-Wa was alive he had longed for far adventure beyond the restricted area of the lake. Now that O-Wa was gone, and he was free to go where he wished, the glamour of the world also was gone. All was sinister and forbidding. He felt very small and inconsequential in a vast, endless enigma of unknown paths and unconjecturable perils.

One particular concerning the future he was certain of: he must not remain by the lake. Ag-Tar might return to resume his hunt for the man-child of O-Wa. Another particular he was just as certain of: he dared not enter the jungle across the plains. For the jungle was the haunt of Ag-Tar and the hunting males, one of which surely would find him and kill him.

He sat down upon a stone, a study in dejection and indecision. Somewhere he must find a new hunting ground that was subjective to his immature means of life prolongation. Yet he must not go far from the valley. In the valley lay his paramount purpose in life—revenge upon Ag-Tar

when his last teeth came, now doubly motivated by the slaying of O-Wa.

His final decision was derivative of all this, abetted by natural curiosity. He would go south to the sea, the big bitter water. Ever since his mother had told him about the sea, he had longed to see it with his own eyes. There, at the southern extremity of the valley, he could lose himself from Ag-Tar, yet Ag-Tar would not be lost to him.

So the pilgrimage began whose Mecca was maturity, when his wisdom teeth joined his rearmost molars. With his best stone axe, he set out southward along the cliffs on the trail to manhood. He had no idea how far it was to the sea, nor what he would find along the way, nor if he ever would get there alive. Yet, once started, he kept on with a singleness of purpose that excluded all deviations. Like the southing bird's was his flight from the scene of his long incarceration. All he had learned from O-Wa, and from his small experience, now came into good usage as he picked his way across untrammeled regions. Silent as a shadow he went, almost a part of the stones and shrubbery among which he glided on flesh-padded feet.

But not alone did he take with him on the pilgrimage the junglecraft of his kind. There was far more than that. From the tutelage of O-Wa he retained two definite and new ideas: the good sign, Dong-Ga, and the bad sign, Ag-Tar; with love for the first and hatred for the second; with resolve to employ the efficacy of the first in the destruction of the second. Already the seed of the new creed had sprouted in fertile soil, and it was blooming in a mind clear of metaphysical deviations. Only the advent of a life-motive stronger than vengeance could swerve him from relentless progress toward an inevitable crisis—the slaying of Ag-Tar, and the self-aggrandizement such a feat would embrace.

EIGHT days he slunk southward, subsisting on roots, berries and small animals, cautiously evading danger, keenly observing the habits of the wild folk, learning dozens of lessons each day of his new freedom. Close calls he had, but he was agile, and fear did not paralyze his thews. He climbed trees as he had climbed the fissure-trail to the ledge, or the wall of the old crater bowl, and baffled many a hungry beast that considered him easy prey.

Then he reached the sea. How he marveled at it! O-Wa had been able to give him only a vague picture of this great, moving plain of greenish blue that flung its foaming waves high up on cliff or sandy beach. He had had no idea there was so much water in all the world.

For days he wandered along the shores of the many arms of salt water stretching deep into the lowlands, finding food along the way, watching the tides go in and out, studying the hazy skylines with weird theories of what lay beyond the edge of the world.

For months he did not stray far from the seashore. He learned what great fun it was to plunge in the surf. He found magic in salt water, for if it was bitter in the mouth, it was far easier to swim in than fresh water. Hours he played on the wind-swept beaches, or slept in the warm sand, far from the hunting grounds of Ag-Tar, where few beasts roamed that were formidable, save the sea monsters sometimes sighted wallowing in the ground swells a mile or so at sea. The marine fauna seldom came ashore, and when they did it was not for long. Kaa found he had little to fear from the clumsy beasts.

He had little time to be lonely after he became accustomed to his exile. In a day he found so many things to do that he was sorry when night came to drive him into hiding. He worked ceaselessly with stones, devising all sorts of outlandish weapons, until he attained an embryo spear. Quickly he saw the value of this invention, and he toiled to improve it. With great delight he ascertained that by throwing the spear point foremost he had a weapon far more deadly, both in accuracy and penetration, than any stone war-club or throwing stick which O-Wa had taught him how to make.

His stone carving he did not give up. In play he traced figures in the sand, or carved them on small stones. But he attempted no conspicuous carvings for fear Ag-Tar might trace him by such means before his last teeth came.

The sign of Dong-Ga he contrived to symbolize in a characteristic manner. By great labor he procured intact the scalp and horns of a young bison. Of this he made a sort of helmet, in imitation of a bison's head. He fastened it under his chin with a thong. But he did not tie the thong. The thong was secured by either end to the helmet by carefully sharpened slivers of bone, which was the way O-Wa had fastened skins together for tunics. Wearing the helmet, Kaa could imagine himself actually a bison, and frequently he went "whoofing" about on all fours in awkward imitation of the good sign.

AS he grew older, he grew correspondingly bolder. Discovering, during various races with animals, that he had great speed of limb, he practised to improve his talent. When he became confident he could outdistance Ag-Tar, or any other hunter, if he chanced upon them, he began to make flying trips up the valley. Farther and farther he roamed, for days and days wandering in all directions, sleeping in trees, or natural caverns, hunting as he went.

He came to know the valley better than the aged Ag-Tar knew it. But he never travelled far outside the valley, for he found that land a forbidding one, devoid of vegetation and edible life-forms. The west rim he found to be much similar to the east rim, save that it was more mountainous, and there were higher craters. Also, the west rim extended far out into the sea in an ever-narrowing peninsula, the end of which he never reached. By the peninsula he learned that the sea south of the valley was only a large arm of a greater sea, whose bounds could not be even imagined.

The east rim was also subjected to his restless explorations. He followed the cliffs miles and miles south, finding they swung deeper and deeper into the interior, salt water swamps lying between them and the sea. How far the swamps extended south he never discovered. Such an expedition would have taken him too long away from the valley where were all his interests in life. No matter how his wanderlust called for wider worlds, there was ever his purpose to stay his feet, and day after day he unfailingly performed the ceremony of feeling for his coveted wisdom teeth.

Occasionally he saw hunters from afar, but he tried to avoid them. At times they pursued him, but he easily outdistanced them, little knowing what a strange figure he cut in his horned helmet. He was still more shy of the vicinity of the tribal barrows, and he never approached them closer than a half mile. At that distance he found an elevated point on the river ridge from which he could look down into the clearing. As the years passed he saw many inexplicable things, but his curiosity never got the better of his discretion. The teachings of O-Wa he obeyed, waiting patiently for maturity.

Only two of the tribe he came positively to recognize during the pilgrimage. They were Ag-Tar and a young female, whose beauty amazed him. Ag-Tar he sometimes saw in the clearing, for with the years the Old Man gradually discontinued hunting with the other males. The young female he saw twice, and each time she was indelibly imprinted upon his memory, so that he never would forget her.

Once a male was pursuing the female through the jungle. From a safe distance he kept pace with them, somehow angry at the pursuer of the she. But his anger was all for naught. The female easily outdistanced the male, and he could see that she was only playing with her pursuer. This discovery pleased him. Furthermore, he was delighted in the knowledge that he had easily kept pace with the fleet female. But, that he himself should pursue her was not to be considered. He knew women to be tabu before the last teeth came, and so he stayed away from womankind as well as mankind, biding his time.

So Kaa grew to manhood, a shadow among shadows. Yet he was a shadow that awaited a day of incarnation, the day of the wisdom teeth. Then, from the jungle he would descend upon the domain of the brute god, fired by the god of woman with ambition for unparalleled deeds.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGN OF THE LIZARD

IN THE years following the flight of O-Wa, the tribe of Ag-Tar had migrated three times to fresh hunting grounds. At the time of O-Wa's execution, they were situated only a day's journey from the sea, in a district teeming with game. Few changes from former villages were in evidence. On the east, the river fronted the carefully selected natural clearing, opposing it the barrow ridge. Dense masses of jungle rose on the north and south. Probably the only outstanding change in the environs was that deep water flanked the clearing instead of shallow, as would have been preferred could such have been found that close to the sea. But the conveniences of habitat were ever subjugated to the abundance of game.

Furthermore, the tribe had no fear of the deep-water carnivora coming ashore, though the heads, or fins, of plesiosauria, sharks and dog-fish frequently were seen in the river before the clearing. Even the pedal, or four-legged, amphibians rarely passed beyond the littoral, or shore-line zone, and especially was Ki-Va-Go, the plesiosaur, a sticker to his home in the deeps. So unusual was the sight of one of

these sea monsters completely emerged that the people hailed it as a fearful phenomenon to be viewed with fascinated interest from a safe distance.

Another change was the increase in the number of barrows, owing to the fact that in the years of tranquillity following the failure of Ka-Mot to dethrone Ag-Tar, the tribe had nearly doubled in number. Whatever might be said of the brutal law of flesh, it lengthened the individual life-tenor of the race by reducing natural mortality. Since the weak infants never were allowed to survive, even though they might have reached maturity, there were no doubtful adults to beget other doubtful young of early mortality.

Consequently, execution of the unfit became more and more rarely necessary, as the laws of both natural and artificial selection combined to expedite growth and the progeniture of sturdier and sturdier young. Ethically, the law of flesh was an iniquitous barbarism; but, eugenically, it challenged improvement in an age when the imperfect could be made no less imperfect by any pathological or surgical intervention. Few of the unfit could have recovered physical equilibrium as Kaa had under the concentrated tutelage of O-Wa, nor would these unfit have had any superior mental gifts to counteract lack of necessary physique, except in rare individuals like Kaa.

Not the least of the direct causes for the rapid increase in the tribe was the Old Man himself. He had had nineteen wives, five of which were living. By these he had fathered one hundred and six children, almost all of which had been vigorous enough to survive the law of flesh, and had reached the mating age before passing into the long sleep. Ag-Tar had not the slightest idea, nor did he attempt to estimate, how many of his subjects were blood relatives. Doubtless, a strain of his blood ran in a large majority, for his nieces, nephews and grandchildren were legion. Yet, though he was venerable father of all the hunters, and indomitable lord of all his kind, contentment was not Ag-Tar's. For the certitude of senility had crept like a ghost upon his trail all through the years, and it was slowly overhauling him. Already Time had made the sign of inexorable augury. The Old Man's teeth had begun to loosen and decompose.

Ag-Tar was a vigorous octogenarian when came his rude awakening from arrogant aplomb. While cracking a shank-bone for the appetizing marrow, the first molar had disintegrated, splitting in twain with an accompanying pang of racking pain. For several days thereafter the Old Man suffered indescribable torture from the fractured grinder, yet he made no complaint, nor did he so much as hint that his teeth were not as sound as ever. Such revelation would have been tempting the Fates who ever dangle doom upon a hair over the heads of tyrants. Bad teeth were certain sign of weakness among the males, and they should immediately have doubted the superiority of one who was so old his teeth were brittle.

Moreover, such a belief was in nowise superstition, though tradition might have associated phenomenal significance with falling teeth. Raw food, especially meat, required excellent masticatory organs. Without absolutely sound teeth, the stomach rebelled from overwork, instigating rapid and general deterioration of bodily vigor. There were no soups or gruels for such invalids. The cure was total anæsthesia, and Ag-Tar ever had been a heartless enforcer of the law of death to the toothless, or to the dentally ailing. Of this the Old Man was keenly aware, with subsequent inward trembling and ashy tongue as a result. Though exempt from the penalty of his own law, there was a higher, inevitable law from which he was not exempt—the death-duel by which all decadent Old Men were violently ushered into oblivion. Even though Ag-Tar kept his dental trouble a secret, it would be only a matter of time before some prime male observed the increasing infirmity of his chief, and took full advantage of it in promotion of himself to coveted superiority.

But Ag-Tar was allowed an abundance of time in which to meditate upon his approaching incompetency. His teeth did not fall out simultaneously, and the loss of a few mattered little in its direct effect upon his vigor, except as it shattered his peace of mind, if he could be said to have attained peace of mind, which resultant turmoil contributed to a sour stomach. Anxiety was further increased whenever he found another tooth loose in his head, and he was rudely reminded that the tenure of his absolute monarchy, by right of fang and fist, was by so many more years shortened.

MORE and more certain Ag-Tar became that if he were to continue superiority in his dotage, he must find other means with which to steady his tottering throne. But of such means he knew nothing. He

had no grand vizier to stand between him and the fury of the mob when the crash came, nor any palace guard to die nobly in defense of his sacred house and body. Among all the males he had no confidant, no one to whom he might look for succor in time of great need. A tyrant he had ruled in his heyday, and now that the force behind that tyranny was diminishing, he could expect no *noblesse oblige* from the victims of his tyranny. And so his crafty brain became a busy laboratory of schemes and calculations in the narrow bounds of his ability to scheme and calculate with the facts and fallacies gathered during his long, eventful life. Power other than man he must turn to; of this he was certain in the beginning. Man alone as an aid to self-superiority was vulnerable to calumny and treason. Such an aid likely would throttle his king the moment he divined the true cause for the need of a sub-king. No, somewhere in the impalpable archives of the unknown he must decipher the priceless secret of higher authority.

The expedition to the east rim of the valley, and the execution of O-Wa was the last extensive journey hazarded by Ag-Tar. At that time three of his jaw teeth were missing, and he was steadily losing confidence in himself. Whenever possible, he avoided personal contact with the other males. Solitary wanderings in the vicinity of the tribal barrows became his habit, and for other hours he sat brooding in the semi-gloom of the great barrow, requiring his wives to bring him food and water in shells, and grumbling over the quality of provender and refreshment thus provided. However, at the eating time he officiated as of yore, unrelenting in the application of his merciless politics, depending upon reputation and bluff to cloak his weakness.

After several moons of laborious meditation, with unaccustomed brain cells, he arrived at a more definite conclusion in the solution of the problem of securing the future of his sovereignty. Neither man nor woman he dared turn to; the inanimate, the trees, rocks, water and sky gave up no secret, therefore from the beast, and the power in the beast, must come succor or magic secret. How this was to be evoked from that with which he could have no direct communication or understanding, he did not know, yet he wrestled for other moons with the puzzle, bringing to bear the last vestige of his knowledge and experience concerning human nature and beast nature.

AS DID his subjects, Ag-Tar vested inestimable power and wisdom in the incomprehensible beast, which he could not help but believe was endowed with a mind exactly similar to his own, and quite possibly superior because incommunicable. Likewise, he had, in common with his subjects, an ineffable fear of superior life-forms in the beast world, and was constantly in dread of them.

Yet, the wisdom of great age and long experience told Ag-Tar that the beast revealed no genuine signs of preconceived purpose, or malintention. By precedent he relegated his fear of the beasts' supernatural powers to an emotion that could be somewhat controlled in the knowledge of what had gone before. And, while he could doubt the reasonableness of this fear, and brave the incarnations of it, the fear still would exist in his younger, less experienced subjects. Therefore, in some manner he believed it possible to bend this phenomenon of the human mind to his requirements.

For Ag-Tar, such logic, primitive as it was, comprised a colossal task, long in the accomplishment. Yet he was encouraged by his progress in metaphysical calculation, and he continued until he had definitely tabulated the outstanding theories of his idea. So he reduced the mass of deductions to the conclusion that by influencing the unguided superstitions of his less wise subjects he could accomplish a distraction from his physical power to a supplanting abstraction of his spiritual power, or his association with the unknown, wherein was the superlative power of all signs, good and bad. Though supersitious himself, he was elevated by additional decades of life, and its ruminations and experiences, above the intellectuality of his subjects, therefore he could comfort himself with reiterated observations, proving that sinister phenomena, the bad signs, were not necessarily followed by results that were actually sinister.

Only in the mind did these sinister results exist. Ill-fortune had been his in the full of the moon as well as in the dark of the moon. In his youth he had feared the eyes that could not be seen, yet could be felt, and the whispers that had no visible mouths he had heard with inner quaking; but, again, experience was positive in its illustrations that these manifestations of the unknown were almost invariably fallible as prognostics of the sinister.

Thus the Old Man was satisfied that, if he but had the opportunity, he could use this inherent fear of the bad sign as a powerful aid in stabilizing his future superiority, without tangible danger to himself.

Most recent among the visible illustrations of this propensity of his people to be appalled by the unknown, or the bad sign, was the unexplainable vanishment of Kaa, the condemned child, in the lake under the cliffs. Ag-Tar had been afraid, but his hunters had been still more afraid. Though the mystery of the youth's disappearance never had been solved, yet Ag-Tar had observed so many other mysteries similar to it, that he could, by comparison, compromise between fallacy and fact and arrive at the inference that a palpable agency had officiated in the purloining of the body.

From this, and a score of other similar, miraculous events, scheming age ripened its plans for the utilization of youthful inexperience and cupidity. As many a pagan creed would find its root, so did Ag-Tar's projected power-idea find root in a phenomenon of Nature. But, though the initiating phenomenon was comparatively unpremeditated, long meditation beforehand had prepared Ag-Tar for just such a phenomenon.

The Old Man had had a vague premonition of it. The air was hot and heavy that midsummer day, oppressive with vaporous content as well as ethereal portent of evil. Three decades before, Ag-Tar had experienced just such a day, and that hot, dank atmosphere, with no stir of wind, had presaged a most terrible calamity.

Crawling out of his barrow, Ag-Tar climbed the ridge and looked east. As he had suspected, a faint pall of smoke hung there, like fragments of rain clouds, above the range of craters along the east rim of the valley. A long time Ag-Tar studied the smoky skyline before he climbed back to his barrow and went in. He was excited now, half fearful, yet grimly determined not to fail in what he purposed to do if he had read the signs aright, and the thing actually came to pass.

ALL DAY, as the hours wore on, Ag-Tar awaited what he scarcely dared hope for. Came the eating time when the tribe gathered full strength about the central fire. Still the oppressive heat hung over the jungle like a smothering blanket. Now and again, from his upraised seat upon a dolmen of boulders, the Old Man looked eastward. The smoke was scarcely perceptible now, yet he still was expectant. The sign was right. Even though the smoke was fading, that it foreshadowed might not fail to materialize. At any moment it might be upon him. Patiently, with inward trembling, Ag-Tar waited, while the daily meat was distributed among the people, and the gorging began.

He was almost resigned to disappointment when the first manifestation of the phenomenon was perceived. It was an almost imperceptible tremoring of the earth, unnoticed by the tribe, who could never dream of such an occurrence, yet apparent to Ag-Tar, who knew what to expect. All his broodings on the power-idea, and a way to harness it for his purpose, came immediately to a climax. Instantly, he gave the sign of attention, and addressed them in a voice hoarse with inner tension:

"Ag-Tar grows stronger with the passing moons. Do the people believe Ag-Tar grows weak with age? Let them see. Ag-Tar makes the earth shake, the rocks fall, and the water leap. See! Fall rocks! Leap water!"

With great vehemence he gave the order, stretching his gaunt arms to the sky, as if in invocation, every muscle of his body tuned for the expected increase in the seismic disturbance.

Completely astounded by this sudden and inconceivable ostentation of the Old Man, the tribe stared at him fearfully. Some thought Ag-Tar had gone mad from the heat, as sometimes occurred among the older males. Who among men was strong enough to shake the earth? Though frankly skeptical, they yet were curious, and now that they were prepared by the Old Man's boast for anything relative to that which he proposed, they became aware that the ground actually was quivering. None ever before had experienced an earthquake, for none was as old as Ag-Tar by thirty years. To them the phenomenon was unbelievable. Sudden terror chilled their skins as the terrestrial vibration grew more marked. In graven silence they sat, as if turned to stone.

Then, from mere quivering as of a leaf in the wind, the ground began violently to shake. There could be no mistake about it. The impossible had been accomplished. And there stood the Old Man, admittedly the super-human perpetrator of the cyclopean feat. And not only was the earth shaking, but the water was leaping. The placid surface of the river was ob-

served to be conspicuously agitated, as if the water had been contained in a huge pail that had sustained a slight shock. Then several loose stones on the barrow-ridge broke from their beds and came rolling down to the clearing.

Behold! the earth shook, the rocks fell, the water leaped!

The Old Man, himself, experienced appalling fear as he perceived the vast tremoring of the earth, as if by his own command, though well he knew it was beyond his control. He, too, shivered from inner dread as he saw the water dance and ripple as if a breeze were passing over it, heard the stones falling as if thrown by invisible hands, perceived the ground shaking so rapidly that he could scarcely maintain an erect position. He was, as it were, gambling with death for high stakes, sustained only by the knowledge that the former earthquake had injured no one, and calm had come, leaving all as before, with the exception of a few dislodged stones.

"See!" roared Ag-Tar, desperately bolstering his fears by the strident sound of his own vaunting voice. "Ag-Tar shakes the earth, makes the rocks fall, makes the water leap. Stronger and stronger is Ag-Tar, the Old Man."

He talked on, boasting to the now thoroughly hypnotized populace. As he talked the first shock died away, and all was still. Yet he continued to brag, awaiting the second shock, which he was certain would occur, since he recalled a number of distinctly separate shocks in the previous quake with intervals of dead calm.

Less than three minutes after the first shock, the second came on.

"Fall rocks! Leap water! Shake earth!" roared the Old Man, and, obligingly, with terrible violence, the subterranean giant shook himself. The command had been timely. The Old Man's grandiloquent, theatrical pose of invocation was indubitably convincing. The tremor grew in violence, rapidly increasing to a turbulent undulation of the earth's crust, as if the ground had been the deck of a ship in open sea. More stones rolled down the barrow-ridge, several bounding across the clearing. Choppy waves appeared on the river, clearly audible as they slapped against the adjacent shore. Tall trees at the edge of the clearing swayed and rustled, though there was no breath of wind.

A woman screamed, signalling a bedlam of screams. Several roars of terror were heard from the males. All were too frightened to move, nor could they have known which way to flee, since the peril was invisible and apparently all around them, even under them. Furthermore, a power so tremendous as to shake the earth itself could not be conceived as escapable by any means, or by any direction of flight.

NOTING the paralytic fright of his subjects, Ag-Tar found courage to go on. Beyond his highest dreams the hoax was succeeding. Here was opportunity to secure his kingship for duration of life, and he must make the most of it. What mattered if the unknown slew him in the middle of his act? He would eventually die by the hand of man if he failed.

"Woo-ga!" he cried, the moment the second shock had subsided, and all was ominously silent. "From the unknown comes the great power to the call of Ag-Tar, the Old Man. Only Ag-Tar does not fear the falling rocks and the leaping water!" His roar of exultation burst like a thunderclap in the silence. The hunters crawled away from him, as if he were a pestilence. All the tribe cowered and retreated, faces drawn into various expressions of the infinite awe and horror they had for this metamorphosed Old Man. At length, only Ag-Tar remained at the central fire, standing with arms flung up as he waited for another shock, if it came, determined to repeat his previous successes if it did come.

Moments of suspense followed, then again the Old Man sensed the preliminary vibration. Before it was fairly under way, the mountebank's strident gutturals grated on all ears:

"Fall rocks! Leap water!" Again and again he repeated his bellowed command as the vibration increased rapidly to a violence even exceeding the second shock. A whole section of talus was shaken loose from the top of the barrow-ridge and came sliding down to the clearing, with a rumble and burst of dust and flying rubble. The river broke into a veritable sea of perpendicular waves, that sloshed high up on the banks, sending showers of drops far into the clearing. And 'mid this awful turmoil of the elements the Old Man never weakened in his grandiose assumption of mastery over the miracle.

It was consummate daring and charlatanry, since it could only have been enacted by superb control of his own dire dread of the quake and its possible results, especially its miraculous and incon-

ceivable cause. And its effect was that which charlatanry ever has upon the gullibly ignorant and deeply superstitious. All the bad signs suddenly were concentrated in this climax of the unknown's power. Here among them, out of a clear sky, was the unknown epitomized in the flesh of man. For Ag-Tar the unknown rocked the earth, and he, all contrary to fearing the vertiginous upheaval of the soil, was promoting repetitions of it in unprecedented defiance of all the constituents of evil omen.

"Ag-Tar is strong!" orated the Old Man. "Ag-Tar makes the rocks fall, the water leap!" His voice, his sign symbols, approached a frenzy of abandon as the dénouement of the third tremor was reached.

Many of the tribe fell flat on their stomachs, scratching and clawing in the grass as they were shaken from equilibrium of body as well as of mind. The children tried to hide under their mothers, and some of the males buried their faces in their arms, as if by blinding themselves they could escape the vast terror that was on the earth.

All the while, Ag-Tar's voice pealed out over the clearing, exhorting, threatening, boasting, implying his oneness with the power that shook the earth, talking to the sky as if he saw in the blue void a life-form of enormity inestimable and visible only to his transcended self.

Then the third shock receded, and once more all was still, save for the crying of the children and the moaning of a number of despairing females. Ag-Tar continued making his signs to the sky, prepared for still another shock, though he hoped the quake was ended.

IT WAS then that an unexpected aftermath of the quake presented itself. Ag-Tar had no warning of it as he stood before the central fire, self-hypnotized by his victory over temerity and his successful acting of an unparalleled rôle.

The marine fauna in the deep water, having been disturbed and probably much terrified by the violent quivering and rocking of the river bed, were seen to be dashing madly about on the surface as if in frenzied search for quiet water. Large fish were making south for the sea, leaping in and out of the water, and several huge turtles were beating up to the eastern shore. Suddenly, two plesiosaurs broke the surface near the shore flanking the clearing and started up the bank, jaws gaping, flipper legs floundering, tails threshing. There was no doubt that the huge reptiles would brook no interference in their flight from the troubled waters, and that they were headed toward the central fire was beyond question.

The shrieks of the populace apprised Ag-Tar of palpable danger from a new quarter. As the tribe scattered and fled for their barrows, the Old Man turned and saw what was coming at him. The monsters were then entirely out of the water, slimy skins glittering in the sunlight, drooping flanks crusted by shell parasites and fragments of seaweed and green algæ.

One look was enough for Ag-Tar. He turned and fled after the frightened tribe. No foolish idea had he of braving Ki-Va-Go, the plesiosaur. Yet, as he scrambled up the rocky stairway to his spacious barrow, his crafty brain, inspired by success in the earthquake hoax, was working uncommonly swift. Earthquake and plesiosaur—here was a combination of the unknown that could not have worked better into his heathenish plans had he arranged it with the Almighty.

On across the clearing came the plesiosaurs, lurching along like gigantic turtles, their seven-foot necks stretched before them in the manner of angry ganders pursuing an enemy of the flock. Obviously, they had not seen the people at first, but their attention speedily was attracted to the naked bodies swarming up the barrow-ridge, some falling backward in their haste, others trampled in the rush. With one accord, the two great beasts lumbered after the fleeing forms. Here was something tangible upon which to vent their rage and terror at the intangible elements which so recently had shaken them from their peaceful feeding in the deep.

A child slipped and fell as the plesiosaurs reached the foot of the ridge. Before the frightened young one could clamber back to safety, the foremost plesiosaur snapped out its great head and seized it. There sounded a shrill scream of mortal agony, a crunch of bones, and the child vanished in the maw of the reptile. Apparently pleased by this appetizing morsel, the plesiosaur reared upon its hind flippers, bracing with its heavy tail, endeavoring to stretch its neck into the lower tier of barrows. As the ugly head neared the barrow mouths, the screams of the females and the hoarser roars of the males rose to frightful bedlam.

But Ag-Tar had been given his cue by the devouring of the child. He turned

Kaa stood there for a minute transfixed by surprise and marvel

swiftly to one of his wives, tore an infant from her arms, and flung it, directly at the head of the foremost plesiosaur. The hurtling body struck the scaly head of the monster and bounded to the ground, whereupon the plesiosaur arched its neck swiftly and the second child disappeared.

"Woo-ga, Ki-Va-Go!" bellowed Ag-Tar. "It is the bad sign. Give meat to Ki-Va-Go. The bad sign has come from the deep water. The bad sign is hungry. Give meat to the bad sign!"

Observing how fared his fellow, the second plesiosaur now asserted his desire for participation in this unexpected feast. Making no sound above the raucous hissing of its breath, the monster rushed at the barrow-ridge and began slithering up by sucking slaps of its huge flippers. The males in the barrows directly in the path of the plesiosaur, rendered frantic by threatening danger, quickly followed the example of the Old Man. Three infants were flung to the monster, which slid back down the ridge and devoured the offering. More and more children were thrown to the reptiles, while Ag-Tar kept up a rapid fire of frenzied gutturals, emphasizing the bad sign and prophesying purgatories.

Frightful carnage ensued as savage man appeased the unconquerable beast. A dozen infants were hurled to certain and terrible death before the plesiosaurs showed signs of satiation. The cessation of the earthquake, which, unfortunately for Ag-Tar's cause, did not recur after the third shock, also had a quieting effect on the plesiosaurs. Wandering away from the barrow-ridge, where they left three unconscious children untouched, the monsters headed for the river, heedless of the Old Man's raving and roaring. Soon, to the vast relief of the terrified tribe, the reptiles plunged into the river, and, with only their dragon heads visible above the surface, swam away south and soon were lost to view behind a headland. But, brief as had been the horrid visit of the plesiosaurs, the sign of the lizard remained with the tribe of Ag-Tar, ineradicably impressed upon inflamed imaginations.

The moment the reptiles were out of sight, the Old Man ran down to the river shore alone. Facing the direction of the plesiosaurs' departure, he knelt and made the sign of fealty, and the symbol signifying "lizard." Peering affrightedly from the barrows, the tribe marvelled at these strange actions. Never before had they witnessed Ag-Tar make the sign of obeisance to anything living or dead, and they were convinced that only the most terrible and threatening of bad signs could abstract such tribute from their king.

WHEN all but the bereaved mothers of the sacrificed children had quieted down, Ag-Tar reassembled the tribe at the central fire. Now, more than ever before, they were tremblingly servile before the august personage of their chief. To them the mere witnessing of his presence of mind in the face of horrible danger enshrouded him with a god-like halo, and in their demoralization they were ready to grasp at the slightest straw of succor. Ag-Tar had shaken the earth and turned away the ferocious plesiosaurs.

Superhuman strength and wisdom these deeds signified, nor did they question the means by which the monsters were repelled. The lives of a few children were as nothing in comparison with their own salvation from the ever-imminent fate of being eaten. The lure of life was stronger than filial love; only the mothers bewailed the fate of their babes, and even they were in awe of the Old Man's wisdom and daring, both during the earthquake and the attack of the plesiosaurs. The mind of each was ripe for the affixion of a god-idea, and this was exactly what Ag-Tar desired.

"Ki-Va-Go, the bad sign, can not be conquered," the Old Man addressed them. "Ki-Va-Go is the eyes that watch from behind and can not be seen. Ki-Va-Go is the whispers that have no mouths. Only Ag-Tar can save the people from Ki-Va-Go. The ears of me have heard the voice of the unknown. No more can Ag-Tar, the Old Man, hunt in the forest. The Old Man must watch the barrows of the people. When Ki-Va-Go, the bad sign, comes from the deep water, then Ag-Tar will save the people. Because Ag-Tar can not leave the people he must have a right hand and a left hand among the hunters.

"Za-Kut, the son of me, will I make my right hand. Za-Kut will lead the hunters in the forest. There will the word of Za-Kut be law, but the word of Ag-Tar shall be law unto Za-Kut. All who disobey the Old Man shall be devoured by Ki-Va-Go. When the people disobey, then will the Old Man call upon the rocks to fall and the water to leap. Then will Ki-Va-Go come and eat the people. Pu-Mok, the brother of me, shall be my left hand. Pu-Mok will I make the watcher of the barrows. Pu-Mok will slay the weak children and the toothless ones. Pu-Mok, also, shall be sub-

ject to the word of Ag-Tar and the law of Ag-Tar, or the earth shall shake and the bad sign shall come. Rise, Za-Kut and Pu-Mok."

The two hunters arose and stepped out before the assembly. They were stupidly amazed at the new sensation of being honored and allowed authority by the Old Man. In the brutal face of each was written the qualities of cruelty, and in their great bodies was the strength to carry out cruelties upon their fellows in the name of justice. Ag-Tar had well chosen his colleagues in the new fetish of the lizard. Not only were his henchmen blood relatives of his, but either was strong enough to slay the Old Man, though neither knew this. Only Ag-Tar was aware of the rapid deterioration that had come upon him now that he had but a dozen sound teeth in his head.

"Peace," concluded Ag-Tar. "The sky tells Ag-Tar of the new power, mightier than all the strength of man. Many lifetimes Ki-Va-Go has waited for food from the people. Ki-Va-Go was angry, but we have fed him. When he is angry again we must again feed him. It is the whisper of the mouths that can not be seen; it is what the leaves of the trees say; it is the song of the wind. Ag-Tar feeds Ki-Va-Go. The bad sign will not forget. Ki-Va-Go will come when the feeder of Ki-Va-Go calls. Then the earth shall shake and the waters leap. And the great smoke shall come into the sky."

Lo! as he spoke, the eyes of the tribe were lifted to the eastern horizon. There they saw the clouds of smoke, seen earlier in the day by Ag-Tar, and now again rising as a result of the quake. Ag-Tar did not so much as hint that he had observed this before he spoke of it. No, it was another false prophecy of his nefarious system of pretence.

As the smoke rose, ostensibly from one of the volcanoes on the east rim, black and dense as no ground fire could be, the people fell upon their knees before Ag-Tar, crying: "Save us from the shaking earth and the great smoke. Save us from Ki-Va-Go, the bad sign. Father of all the hunters, save us."

"Peace," called Ag-Tar, condescendingly. "If the people obey, the earth shall not shake. Only shall Ki-Va-Go come when the people disobey the Old Man. Then must we feed Ki-Va-Go, or he will eat us."

Only the ignorant and consummately superstitious could have accepted such a fetish. And as the savage sees life in the stone, so did the tribe of Ag-Tar see a new and monstrous power in this guileful Old Man, who had so well staged his introduction of the evil god-idea.

In the days succeeding the earthquake and the attack of the plesiosaurs, the eating time became an hour not only for gorging, but for preaching. Za-Kut and Pu-Mok proved willing tools of Ag-Tar's. With avid zeal and heartless efficiency they performed the duties allotted them. To them this was promotion to superiority without the hazard of the death-duel, and they were hugely satisfied in their high offices of field marshal and chief justice.

AS THE months passed by, and Ag-Tar's teeth continued to fall, he showed himself less and less to the tribe, mooning and scheming in the semi-gloom of the great barrow. When he did come out before the assembly at the eating time, all was hushed, and the people fell upon their knees in the sign of obeisance. Those slow in this were soundly clouted by Za-Kut and Pu-Mok, who greatly enjoyed such violent expression of their new authority.

The plesiosaurs worked naturally into the scheme. Once they had tasted human flesh, it was a simple matter for them to be lured to the shore by baits of raw meat. This Ag-Tar accomplished in the promulgation of the fetish that Ki-Va-Go was a personal friend of his, and that he alone could defend the tribe against the unconquerable bad sign. There were always excuses that some one had been disobedient, and so the rite became a regular ceremony. The moment Ki-Va-Go appeared in the river Ag-Tar was notified, whereupon he ran down to the bank with whatever meat was on hand, throwing it to the reptiles. This they devoured, and if they were not satisfied, more meat must be obtained, whether beast or human.

As the Egyptians gave the virgin to the Nile, so the tribe of Ag-Tar sacrificed their young to the giant denizens of the salt river in propitiation of the bad sign. The forms of ceremonies changed, were improved upon. Deeper and deeper the pagan faith was wrought in puerile minds. The lizard fetish became sacred, though it was a demon faith. Created in false miracles and self-aggrandizement, the creed of blood excited the evil impulses of the people, until they became wild for blood sacrifice, and the ceremonies attendant on such sacrifices became abandoned and frenzied beyond description. And ever the Old Man strengthened his position by

preachings and woeful prophecies. All the while he waited for earthquakes, determined, at the first sign of a shock, to rush out into the clearing and call down curses upon the tribe with the excuse that some one of them had disobeyed his laws. Every appearance of the plesiosaurs he endued with significance by making believe he had called upon the sign of the lizard.

He was a conscienceless mountebank, glorying in malicious sensationalism, enjoining each phenomenon of the unknown as a personal prerogative. Nor did any one question this fetish of blood sacrifice. Contrary to questioning it, they fed upon it, enlarged it, varied it. Ki-Va-Go was a god and the Old Man was his prophet. Ki-Va-Go was a god that pleased many and injured few. Orgies and excesses they committed in the name of their god and their prophet.

So came the dance of the lizard into being, which culminated in the sacrifice of the young to the hungry sea-beasts.

The god of man was a bad god, yet like all bad gods, he suited the occasion and appealed to the senses of the masses. Therefore, it was a powerful god, however degenerating the commandments of its criteria.

And like all bad gods it was doomed for a fall.

In the second year after the beginning of the creed of the lizard, the first sign of a savior for the people was glimpsed in the jungle by the hunters.

It was a slim, tall youth, with horns upon his head, so they reported, who ran like the wind and was as hard to see as a shadow.

"Only from afar have we seen this strange man-creature," was Za-Kut's report to Ag-Tar. "He is fleeter than our fastest runners. He has horns on either side of his head. He is tall as a tree and carries a long throwing stick."

"It is nothing," grunted Ag-Tar. "The jungle is filled with strange beasts. It is a monkey."

But Ag-Tar did not feel so sanguine about it under his derisive front. There was ill-boding in this report of the strange horned man-creature. Who, or what, was it? How could it have come into being? Swiftly his mind pictures were troubled with the memory of the silent lake that did not give up its dead. A searing chill of fear shot through him. What if a genuine magician of the unknown were to come out of the jungle and destroy his new palace of lies? What if the condemned man-child had been in league with the unknown, in reality, not in make-believe?

Subsequently, Ag-Tar issued an order to Za-Kut that a special expedition be sent to capture, or kill, the man-creature with the fabulous horns, who was tall as a tree, and swift as the thin shadow of the flying bird.

But the order was impossible of execution. No one could catch the man with the horns. Yet, more and more often he was seen, haunting the hunting grounds of the tribe, now here, now there, like an ignus fatuus. Ag-Tar's anxiety was devastating, for, though he could not be said to have a conscience, yet he had fear of calamity thrice magnified by his dabblings in the unknown. So assiduous had been his seeking into the unknown that he had begun to have a clarifying idea of the terrifying forces it really possessed beyond his control.

In that glimpse of truth he saw inevitable doom, for he was the opponent of truth, a king and a prophet of lies and hollow schemes. But only he was permitted to know the treacherousness of the foundation upon which his new power was erected. He dared confide in no one as the years drew their mantle over his heyday, and all the debaucheries of blood and falsehoods that his heyday had brought to pass.

He had conquered the forces without, but not the forces within. Hell he could know nothing of, yet hell was his, and it was breaking him.

CHAPTER VII

THE DAUGHTER OF FETISH

SOMEWHERE among the lurid fires of hates and iniquities that make up the heart of the most flagitious of villains there must smoulder at least a spark of love, and the righteousness inherent in love.

Normal man in the making is so constituted that the strain of tenderness never can be quite eradicated, whatever the disintegrating powers of meanness that feed upon it. In Ag-Tar, the Old Man, love had been for half a century hopelessly buried in brutality. But as infirmity increased with the falling teeth stage, the structures of cruelty rotted away from the nucleus of love, and the spark waxed to a feeble glow.

First came an unqualified yearning in the Old Man for sincere attention. The

servility of his brow-beaten wives could not satisfy that longing. A hand that scratched his head out of fear of consequences if it did not scratch was empty of the real pleasure to be gotten from scratching. He observed the wives of other males eagerly digging and rubbing at the scalp, where the itch never could be quite allayed, saw the expressions of perfect contentment in the face and posture of scratched and scratcher, and he knew that this humble yet vital font of contentment was denied him. Therefore, he was envious and doubly grouchy, defeating by his grouchiness any possibility of any one vouchsafing genuine sympathy for him, or respect or solicitude for his royal person that was not born of fear.

In truth, it was not marital attention which the Old Man felt need of, but an attention born of a higher devotion, one transcending all the desecrational associations of the flesh, a devotion gentle in the manner of the time, when mating loves could not have enjoyed any particular gentleness in the true meaning of the word.

It was not unbeseeming that a child should have been the one innocently to supply this need in the decrepit Old Man. Forsooth, only a child, with a child's lack of fear because of purity of purpose, could ever have approached Ag-Tar from his acute angle of vulnerability to sympathy.

Chee, the New Moon, infant daughter of Mam, Ag-Tar's youngest wife, was the unwitting emissary of love to the self-ostracized Old Man. From the first this black-eyed, brown-skinned kewpie evinced no terror of her wicked father, as did her numerous brothers and sisters. Only curiosity had Chee for Ag-Tar, a curiosity that was centered upon five long hairs which grew out of the Old Man's upper lip near the corners of the mouth, three on one side, two on the other. These hairs were snow white, and they were the nearest approach to a beard in all the tribe. This beard was far from beautiful or even venerable, yet Chee determined to possess those hairs, or at least get her hands upon them.

One of Ag-Tar's wives was invariably on watch at the mouth of the great barrow during Ag-Tar's occupancy of it, and this watch was not only to warn the Old Man of any danger threatening, but to keep the children from crawling in and annoying him. But Chee's curiosity-complex concerning Ag-Tar's beard was in nowise eradicated by the sentinel. Repeated punishments for attempted entrance into the Old Man's sleeping chamber did not deter her, but merely made her more wary. As a modern child might watch opportunity to catch undetected the goldfish in the parlor bowl, Chee watched her chance to enter the forbidden sanctum and pluck the five-haired beard.

THE eventual attainment of Chee's desire was abetted by the plan of Ag-Tar's household. There were six barrows, one large barrow for Ag-Tar, on either side of which were built the smaller barrows of his wives and their particular families. Mam's barrow was next to Ag-Tar's on the left, allowing Chee a minimum risk of discovery by the eagle-eyed wives when the opportunity came for her to toddle into the great barrow.

One day, while Ag-Tar was asleep on his couch of dried bison-skins, Mam bethought herself of a drink of water, while Zaa, the wife on watch, stole into her barrow to obtain a preserved bone, the marrow of which had ripened to the stage of deliciousness that made it a confection. While Mam was at the spring and Zaa in her barrow, Chee slipped into the tabu barrow unseen by any one. The Old Man she found snoring loudly in deep slumber, the coveted hairs rising and falling tantalizingly in unison with the snores. Even in his sleep Ag-Tar was a fierce and surly brute, but Chee had not yet learned to fear brutes. Besides, there was a certain ludicrousness in the grotesque repose of the high priest of the lizard, that robbed him of waking repellency.

On hands and knees Chee crawled up to the sleeping giant, stretching one chubby hand toward the undulating hairs. She had some trouble obtaining a firm grip, but the moment she did she pulled back. The tug was not required to be violent in order to be severe in its effect. Never before had the roots of the patriarch's beard been so deeply and rudely disturbed. With a loud grunt, Ag-Tar awakened, rising to a half-prone posture, eyes glaring hostilely about. At first he was unable to discover the malefactor so bold as to awaken him. Then, a gleeful gabble attracted his attention to the sanded floor where sat the tiny Chee in the position into which she had been violently precipitated by her father's impetuous uprising.

"Umph!" grunted the Old Man, making a vicious grimace calculated to frighten Chee into abandoned flight.

However, the grimace and grunt not only

failed in their purpose, but received rebuttal in the form of another grimace and a miniature "umph!"

In his younger years Ag-Tar would have knocked the baby rolling toward the entrance of the barrow for the intrusion, and he would have followed that by beating the wife who had been so negligent in her watch as to allow the child's entrance. But the filial arrogance and contemptuous self-sufficiency of youth long since had departed from the brittle bones and withering flesh of the Old Man. He had attained the appreciation of age for sincere affection in the young. Therefore was he deterred from a vehement outburst. Instead, he lay there leaning on his hands, looking down at the baby. At first, as Chee crawled to him and began reaching for his beard, Ag-Tar shrank growling away from her, feeling that these soft, searching hands were a contamination or a violation of masculine supremacy and integrity. But the feeling passed as the spark of tenderness glowed more warmly within him. His grunts became no less gruff, for want of practise in contented grunting, but they came to have a meaning entirely removed from gruffness.

Wonderingly, Ag-Tar finally picked up the child in his great, bony hands, and sat it in his lap. He permitted the feeble, clumsy fingers to pull his five long hairs. He noted that with every tweak of the hairs on his lip there occurred a delightful titulant sensation, having a climax in the small of his back, and setting up an unparalleled excitation all over his skin. He did not know what tickling was, yet he experienced it with great pleasure. He wanted to laugh, though he did not know how to laugh. Therefore, the tickling, having no outlet, or expression, damned up inside him until he was in unbearable spasms. His only assuagement was to pick up Chee and hold her out of reach of his beard. This he did until he was somewhat recovered, whereupon he allowed the baby again to pull the hairs.

AT this juncture, Mam discovered the absence of her child, and excitedly conferred with Zaa, who had returned to her post with marrow bone, wholly unaware that a specific tabu had been violated in her brief absence. The missing Chee brought to attention, Zaa was greatly disturbed by the sound of a baby's voice from the inner chamber of the great barrow. Instantly, she ran into the barrow after Chee, prostrating herself before the Old Man, expecting a dreadful beating for her negligence. But, to the astonishment of Zaa, Ag-Tar merely spurned her with one foot and ordered her back to her post.

So did the woman-child accomplish the breaking of a tabu in the filling of the narrow niche of tenderness among the deep scars of iniquities that composed the savage soul of Ag-Tar. In the child, Ag-Tar found a sincere friend, if a mute one. From an adult he could never have permitted such overtures as he permitted Chee. All adults he suspected. A life-time of falsity and cruelty had rendered him wary of recalcitrance from his subjects. But Chee would not recalcitrate. For recalcitration she could have no motive. So he made a friend of his daughter, and the fable of the lion and the lamb had its theme foreshadowed.

The hunters were greatly amazed when it became noised about that the Old Man had taken unto himself a favorite, and that an infant of the inferior sex. But they accepted this as they had accepted the sign of the lizard. And like the sign of the lizard, Chee joined the great multitude of unquestioned traditions and fetishes.

Favoritism necessarily gave to Chee an exalted elevation in the tribe. As she grew older, and her companionship with Ag-Tar remained unchanged, the course of her life was radically swerved from that adhered to by the common female, whose lot was merely to mate and bear children at the earliest possible time. Chee became a sort of sacred priestess, or princess-elect. What little vanity she had was thereby inflated as she grew naturally to hold herself superior to others of her sex. Relatively, this feeling of superiority, or independence, inculcated the idea that she was too precious a prize for the ordinary male.

The law of the tribe was that each female must mate upon reaching maturity. If she had no choice approvable by Ag-Tar, then she was given to either an unmated male or to a male who was strong enough to manage an addition to his seraglio. But Chee was exempted from the law, being Ag-Tar's favorite. The Old Man comprehended that his pet no longer would be able to devote undivided attention to him if she were mated. So he made Chee daughter of the lizard, and as such unmarriageable. He was merciless in punishment meted out to any male so daring as to make overtures to Chee. And, of course, he had Chee's personal preference to aid him in this. None of the males appealed to her.

UNBURDENED by the duties of the ordinary female, Chee grew into an unusually attractive individual of her kind and sex. Pride in spirit was written in her flashing eyes and erect bearing. She scraped no pelts and never had to excavate a barrow. Her hands were soft and brown, her body untwisted from its natural, graceful lines by early and perennial childbearing. Her luxurious black hair, always carefully oiled with fat, was the pinnacle of beauty for every male in the tribe, the fondling of hair being the only caress they knew.

Darling of Ag-Tar and adored by all the males, envied by every female and exempt from all distressing responsibilities, Chee might have become spoiled and petty, if it had been in the nature of her to be spoiled or petty. But the wild was in her, and the priggeries and snobberies of society were a closed book to her. She was ever sincere, and snobbery knows not the name of sincerity. The glorious love of life presents no surface for the chill veneers of pomposity. Forsooth, she became a confirmed coquette, but never an unfair coquette was she, hiding behind the bulwark of chivalry when the game went against her.

She took no advantage of her favoritism with the Old Man. She did not need such support to win the eternal game. Her legs were her faithful and invincible protectors.

Much running wild in the jungle, together with freedom from drudgeries of the barrow, had developed her running muscles to a high degree of efficiency. At the outset, her endurance was as great as man's in feats of self-propulsion, and long practise increased this endurance of lung and thew. She could fairly fly on her twinkling legs, and when she leaped it was as if hurled by the recoil of steel springs. Not one of the tribe could equal her, though many of the males were doughty sprinters.

Her system was invariable. Luring the prospective Romeo away from the clearing by signalling him with her eyes, she would proceed to infatuate her prey from a safe distance until he was blinded to the death penalty pending if he were discovered or reported to be courting the princess. Then would begin a game of hide-and-seek, which ended in open chase through the jungle, Chee the pace-maker. Sometimes for as long as an hour she would maintain just enough lead on her pursuer to avoid falling into his hands by any accident.

After she had grown weary of the sport for the time she would feign exhaustion. Immediately, the pursuer would stretch himself to his limit, encouraged by the apparent weakening of the desired. Soon the male would have run himself to genuine exhaustion, whereupon Chee promptly showed him such running as he never before had seen, speedily outdistancing him until he could no longer see her and was required to return discomfitedly to the clearing.

AFTER a time Chee's reputation as an unequalled runner became well known among the hunters and youths, and they saw the fallacy of heeding the challenges of the privileged princess. However, since Chee never reported such chases to Ag-Tar, the males often were willing to take a long chance, hoping to develop some fabulous increase in strength of limb with which to overtake her.

Thus Chee kept in the pink of condition as sprint and marathon champion of the tribe.

Chee ever looked for other worlds to conquer, and naturally she came to meditate upon the existence of the man who would eventually subject her with his superior speed of limb. Such a person was approached through visualization of the man with the horns, whom no one could catch so fleet he was, and whom no one ever had seen except from a long distance. Once she had obtained a fleeting glimpse of the lithe, bronze creature, and that glimpse had whetted her desire for closer acquaintance or observation. From all the descriptions of the hunters, and from what she actually had seen, the man with the horns was something of a superman, with all the godlikeness attributive of the superman. Here was a tangible object for her reveries, and frequently she thrilled with imagining a chase by the horned man. The fancy came more and more often until it became at last a secret fetish all her own.

"It is a monkey," Ag-Tar told her when she asked him about the man with the horns. "Woo-ga, the man with horns. He is bad sign."

But while she scratched the head of the old patriarch, Chee maintained unspoken doubts as to the bad sign of her dream. In her innate longing for love, she sensed the ideal mate with infallible accuracy.

In her heart she knew where to find her level, and she refused to believe in the intangibility of that level.

After her tender ministrations of beard pulling and head scratching had put Ag-Tar to sleep, she would steal away into the jungle to dream of the man with the horns and to study her reflection in a near by quiet pool. The love-god was tangible, yet with just enough of the intangible to taunt her into reiterations of her dream and consequent strengthening of the ideality of the dream.

Now, her fetish of love for the man with the horns grew into the semblance of a god-idea to which she ever was a devoted convert. Nor did the fetish of the lizard infringe upon her love litanies. She had no sincere feeling for the worship of Ki-Va-Go. To her Ag-Tar was only an old and pettish man to be coddled and comforted. She saw his weaknesses and could not accept him as as awful magician the tribe believed him to be, nor could she endow her father's reptile god of man with attractive qualities. She remained aloof from the frenzied dance of the lizard.

The rite of infant sacrifice only horrified her. Though in the ignorance of youth she could not efficiently combat the machinations of age, and therefore must accept the superficial traditions of age, there was a feeling of rebellion in her against the unpleasantness of the lizard orgies. Yet, all the while, unknown to her, in her sympathy for Ag-Tar, whose crumbling soul she alone could see, she was fast becoming his one solid bulwark among all the sham bulwarks of brutality and bigotry he had builded about his decaying sovereignty. Only Chee was genuinely loyal to the priest of the lizard, because she alone understood him and could have no false conceptions of him. Her fealty was seated in truth and sympathy, but the fealty of the tribe was seated in falsehoods and fear.

THE tall figure beside the trunk of the huge pinite was so motionless as to be mistaken for a malformation of the tree itself. A skin almost as brown as the bark contributed to the illusion, though light and shadow produced rich ochres and mahoganies in the symmetrical grooves formed by sleek contours of swelling and tapering muscles. An unobservant person coming upon that silent form would have been startled by the sudden metamorphosis of it from an apparently inanimate and indistinct blur to a vivid picture of pulsing, vibrant life, none the less disturbing for its absolute passivity. And the nucleus of such a transformation doubtless would have been the dark, shining eyes, so intent in their foci, yet so furtive and omniscient, at once repellently sinister and fascinatingly hypnotic, as if in them was the seething concentrate of a superhuman virility, swift, unerring, tireless, deadly—of infallible certitude in any struggle of its habitat, the primeval wild.

Ten years had nearly obliterated any resemblance of this stalwart, young savage to the youth who had so quakingly ventured into the wide world from the tomb of O-Wa. Not alone were great changes wrought in breadth and stature. In the very attitude of the young male was a palpitant expectancy, an anticipation of triumph long awaited, a restive self-confidence eager to try itself in the supreme battle. For the pilgrimage was finished. That day the seeking fingers of Kaa, the Unnamed, had marked the final cusp of his wisdom teeth. The sign of wisdom and maturity had completely manifested itself. At last the proofs of manhood were come to break the long fast from the feasts of life. Now he was a man with a man's purpose, and in him swept and bellied flames of vengeance fed by the glowing fuel of life-long hate.

On the threshold of a new existence, an existence in contact with his kind, Kaa was wholly at loss as to how his kind looked upon him. In all innocence he had furnished the material for the fable of the man with the horns, and he still wore, crowning his dark, straight hair, the headdress of horns and scalp which he had devised during the pilgrimage and had faithfully worn throughout the years of his exile. He would have been additionally confident had he known that the tribe never had observed him closely enough to learn the exact nature of his head-dress, and that they believed him a being of magical properties.

Save for the horned helmet and a sagging tunic of tawny sabre-tooth skin, he wore no clothing. His only weapon was a spear possibly eight feet long, and which he held in one hand near the middle of the shaft, the butt buried in the earth beside one bare foot. In the spear he had concentrated his gifts of artistry and ingenuity. Hours of solitude, and the patient labors instigated by solitude, had gone into the careful craftsmanship of the spear, making it a work of unusual beauty. The head was of crystal quartz, painstakingly chipped to an almost perfectly graduated point. A neat, compact binding of seasoned gut secured the head to the shaft, which was of a hard, yet pliant, spotted wood,

similar to ironwood. The shaft had been smoothed and straightened with a stone scraper and had been polished with sand. Near the butt appeared two separate groups of rings cut in the wood, between which was carved a T with a concave line just above it—the sign of the bison, representing the horns and face of that beast.

From his position on the long ridge paralleling the river, he could see, about half a mile north and below, the clearing occupied by the tribe of Ag-Tar. This he was studying through the intervening palms, which at intervals lifted their drooping heads above the solid masses of vegetation comprising the dense jungle of the river bed.

Though eager to test his mettle in the long-meditated death-duel with Ag-Tar, Kaa was not rashly precipitant now that he was on the eve of that greatest battle of his life. Occasional observations of the tribe had revealed that Ag-Tar no longer hunted with the other hunters, and that the Old Man could not easily be approached in the open save during the eating time. But it was not Kaa's intention to attack Ag-Tar at the eating time. He would wait until the males were off on the daily hunt. Some of the rites of the lizard had come to his attention, and he suspected that the Old Man had effected a change in his relationship with the tribe. Not only might it be possible that the males would protect the Old Man instead of being overjoyed at the idea of his defeat, but there was an uncertainty as to whether the tribe would accept him as their kind. Though he knew nothing of the reality of his reputation among the hunters, he yet was aware he had been seen and pursued in spite of his efforts to avoid it. His purpose was first to slay Ag-Tar, unhampered by possible interference from the tribe, and then to assert his superiority over the other males.

FOR nearly an hour Kaa had watched from his position by the tree, noting the departure of each group of hunters for the hunting grounds. His plan, as vaguely outlined by O-Wa years before, and revised during the pilgrimage as circumstances seemed to require, was to descend swiftly upon the clearing in the absence of the hunters, disperse whoever barred his way to the great barrow and precipitate the death-duel by revealing his identity as the unnamed son of Ka-Mot and O-Wa.

Years of stoical self-control, with but one idea in mind, were not productive of temerity in the final crisis of that idea. There were no visible signs of excitement about him when with swift, soundless strides he suddenly vanished from the ridge and dropped down into the shadowy aisles of the jungle. But, nerveless as he outwardly appeared, he was seething within. For life had opened for him with the end of the pilgrimage, and he could not help but react with increased tension to such an opening.

Countless fragments of mind-pictured possibilities came and went before his mind's eyes. Out of the years of monotonous exile he was at once attending a duel and a coronation, while, lurking timorous and attractive in the offing, was a wedding. For he had known the mesmeric call of the opposite kind, and but for the stoical hand of his immortal gift of reason, and the self-volition inherent in reason, no oath of vengeance could have deterred him from answering that call posthaste. But the limitations and repressions of boyhood had vanished with the coming of the wisdom teeth. He was like a prisoner released from long incarceration. In him the long-aging wine of life was ripe for the drinking. And there was one face besides Ag-Tar's that he would never forget. When he thought of meeting her his resolves of vengeance were for the time dissolved in heady nepenthe, and his steps were unnecessarily long and high, like an intoxicated person's.

Couching and guiding his spear so that it passed unentangled through the openings in the dense foliage he threaded, Kaa kept on toward the clearing, alert for any lurking beast or man that might wilfully contest his passage. Proceeding thus, he came abruptly upon a scene which brought him to a standstill, transfixed by surprise and marvel.

On the banks of a tiny pool, almost hidden by ferns, was the woman he had seen during the pilgrimage, half-reclining on one elbow as she studied her reflection in the mirror-like surface of the water. Kaa's impulse, born of habit, was to turn and retreat as silently and undetectedly as he had come upon the arresting scene. Yet of such wondrous beauty was this female, in his eyes, that he was overpowered and incapable of any self-volition either to advance or retreat. His deadly mission suddenly was subdued to a motive extrinsic. In its place came a motive so all-engulfing that he was metamorphosed by it. His feet seemed suddenly as light as if they had no weight; his head swam; his blood became a golden elixir that buoyed him up

from all consciousness of materiality. A din was in his ears, and a stinging, as of fine brandy, upon his tongue.

IT was not Kaa who made the first change in the situation. Chee, for she it was, dreaming there of the man with horns as was her wont, felt the danger vibration of strange, unseen eyes. At the instant the shock of warning was manifested, she was transformed from idle relaxation to a palpitant engine of violent action. She sprang from where she lay as if by hands as well as feet, and in a twisting vault soared over the pool to the other side. She landed lightly, facing with threatening mien the direction whence the telepathic message of danger had been communicated.

If Kaa was startled by the sudden move, he made no sign. Only he continued to stare, enraptured, ebon eyes shining with changing lights. And save for his eyes, in which could be observed the fires of life within, he might have been the perfect petrifaction of some wildwood god.

The instant Chee identified the tall, bronze form, her snarls ceased, and a great wonder, half timidity, came over her. At first she could not believe this was not merely a vision of that which she so many hours had wooed as a vision. Then, convinced beyond shadow of doubt that here was the incarnation of the elusive man with horns, she became exceedingly coy and shy, unable to stand in one position for any length of time, hardly abashed, for she knew nothing of embarrassment, yet instinctively exercising the gifts of charm inherent in her. Relatively, she observed, with keen satisfaction, that she had been right about the horned man's genus. He certainly was neither ape nor monkey. Now she could see that the horns were not a growth of the skull, but were merely set upon his head for some unknown reason. Far from any semblance of the beast, Kaa was the most beautiful and imposing man she ever had laid eyes on. Even the idealization conjured in her mind-pictures had endued her dream-mate with no pulchritude superior to the strong reality. His eyes! She could not endure the excruciating delight their electric gaze induced. She must run, hide, escape the sinking weakness which was stealing over her like an ache—an ache whose pain was ineffably sweet.

Kaa had entertained no idea of stronger motives in life than hate. All his visions of what life held in store for him he had seen through the red mists of the hate-fetish, and he had not considered that one of those visions might deter him from consummating the hate motive. He could not have comprehended that hate was but a faint echo of human emotion as compared with love. Love had borne him, love had prolonged his life until he could prolong life itself. The very hate he had for Ag-Tar was born of love, in the instinctive resistance of love against the mortal enemy of love. Kaa did not change his mind about his expedition to the clearing. He had lost all power to change his mind. No motive could have torn him from the pool and the quintessence of delight that wooed him in the velvety eyes of that lithe, brown form across the pool. Each thew, each nerve, each brain cell danced and tremored with spontaneous eagerness, and from his throat broke the low, deep mate call of man, older by a hundred thousand years than he, and freighted with more meaning than all the puny sounds or symbols in the whole vocabulary of any language or combination of languages.

Chee heard and responded. Never before had she heard that call in its primal form, yet there was the ape in her as well as in him, though long solitude had intensified the atavism in Kaa and social fetish had dimmed the responsive atavism in her. Clear and sweet, nevertheless, she answered the call in no definite sound symbol, but merely a cry that was the nearest approach to expression of that transcendent delight pervading her. His call had been a prolonged consonant from the chest; hers was a vowel, flute-like as it issued from a throat comparatively tenuous.

BY NATURE the aggressor, Kaa made the first definite move in the courtship. Very slowly, with mincing step, he started forward, never taking his eyes from her, seeing all else as in a dream, feet instinctively adjusting themselves to obstructions and directions. He seemed to feel his spear an unnecessary burden in the situation, for with a swift, decisive movement, he thrust the butt of it into the spongy soil near the pool, and went on without it. For that matter, he never would forget the location of the spear no matter how far he should venture away from it. On around the pool he crept, as if stalking a moose-deer, save that the prey was conscious of the stalker and approved the action.

Chee remained standing where first she had seen Kaa, until he was almost within

leaping distance of her, then she ran back a few steps and paused behind a tree, around which she peeped. He was not surprised at this hint of a game of hide-and-seek. To him there seemed nothing phenomenal in it. It was as if he were repeating something that had happened in the dim past. His steps quickened somewhat as he neared the tree, whereupon Chee broke away from it and ran to another. Kaa promptly broke into a trot, somewhat prancing, like a steed eager for the race. Chee also accelerated her pace, looking frequently over her shoulder with ardent glances and with flouncings of shoulders.

It was both instinctive and habitual for Chee to lead the chase. Her great-grandmother had been similarly pursued before the fetish of tribal marriage laws, and her many matches with ambitious suitors had made such an event nothing unusual. But there was an unprecedented thrill to this race, for she knew she would be caught, whether or not by the superior speed and endurance of the hopeful suitor.

Heading south, away from the clearing and along the ridge rimming the river bed, Chee settled into a tireless trot, gauging her pace to the pace of her pursuer, always about a dozen strides ahead of him. Strangely, it was she, not he, who was on the lookout for danger. Chee detoured to avoid a ferocious sabre-tooth seen devouring a young tapir in the undergrowth ahead. She observed and avoided two megatheres feeding in a thicket directly in their path. Kaa would have followed her blindly into a raging furnace. This she knew and guarded against, though she knew not how she knew it. His consciousness of materiality was well-nigh obliterated, yet hers was hypersensitized. Always in love the man is blind, and the woman has a thousand eyes, but blind in one, and that her perspective of love itself.

The chase continued. It was not Chee's intention to surrender easily. Besides her natural desire to prove his love by testing the determination of it, her pride as a champion runner was at stake. She never had been beaten in the chase, and, according to tradition, neither had the horned man ever been outrun. Therefore, two motives were in the running, the one intensified by the other, since the longer and harder the chase, the sweeter the finish. Chee would outrun him if she could, though Kaa was predestined to win in any event, of which he unfortunately was not aware else he should have been vastly more confident.

THEY were several miles from the tribal barrows when Chee resorted to her old trick of feigning fatigue. Already she had led the chase farther and faster than ever before. As all the hunters had done, Kaa nibbled eagerly at the bait. The moment he saw her falter, he began to sprint. Heretofore he had not let himself out, but now he did, and the spirit of play was rampant in him.

As his rushing feet now drew near her, Chee also sprinted, calculating to run him out and leave him far behind. But in this she was quite mistaken. Kaa, far from being out-stripped, passed her easily and ran along just in the lead and a few paces to the right. She redoubled her efforts to increase her speed, drawing her breath in great gasps as she ran as never before, frightened to a frenzy by the very idea of being beaten. But every spurt she made was breasted and outspurted by Kaa, and that with surprising ease as his long, lithe legs hurled him along. He was in as prime a condition as she, moreover, he possessed the indomitability of the male fighting heart.

Now Chee knew what it meant to run oneself to exhaustion. Flecks of fire swam before her eyes; her lungs burned; her blood seemed turned to water. Yet it was not her wind that gave out first. It was her legs. The blood in them seemed suddenly to stop circulation. An aching numbness assailed her thighs and calves; her ankles wobbled; her feet grew as cold and weighty as stones. And still the implacable Kaa forged ahead, playing the game with grim certitude. Now that he knew he had won, he was in no hurry for the laurel wreath of the victor. To him it was delightful play, exceeding all former conceptions of delightful play.

Inevitably, she stumbled. Pivoting swiftly in a flying leap, Kaa caught and held her in outstretched arms. She stood there, unresisting, swinging slightly as inertia overmastered in the cessation of movement, while with eager eyes, softened now to the glow of ramollescent moons, he caressed her. Palm, fern, and pinite bent their heads in benediction as these two were thus trothed. A monkey mother hid a reddish face in hairy hands and peered down at them through her fingers. For these two the breeze was laden with exotic perfumes; for them the palms and ferns were a bower quivering with golden effulgence.

Nor was their promise to each other made without the sanctification of a master of

ceremonies. In the kindly smile of the azure infinite was the blessing of Him who looked proudly down upon these two untarnished scions of the sacred dust whereon the breath of Life was breathed in the beginning.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MATING MOON

WANDERING steadily southward from the spot where their paths in life would by the choice of each ever after converge, Kaa and Chee reached the sea. Chee never before had seen the sea, and Kaa never had lost his great awe and wonder of the majestic *loo-ba sabu*. For minutes they stood still at the edge of the jungle, looking off across the broad, sandy beach where the breakers swelled and rumbled, where the greenish blue of the illimitable background rolled lazily in to burst and spread in festoons and winrows of white foam, scintillant as prismatic fountains in the strong sunlight.

East of them the river cut inland in the form of a long, triangular bay, fringed by fern, palm and drooping evergreen. On the west towered a high headland about a mile distant, over the crest of which a number of winged scavengers were slowly circling. The whole of the broad vista was stirred by but one visible form of surface life, a deep-sea monster, with gaping jaws, wallowing slowly through the waves toward the mouth of the river, now dark and loomingly distinct, now lost in a smother of foam. Lonely and beautiful it was, as only the melancholy grandeur of the wilderness can be lonely and beautiful.

"The sky has fallen down and made the big water," imparted Chee.

"I do not know," he rejoined. "Many moons I live by the big bitter water before the last teeth come in me. The unknown lives in the big bitter water."

An invisible fleck of spindrift, like fairy gossamer, came flying in on the ocean breeze, kissing the face of Chee with lips delightfully refreshing. It was a good sign from the unknown. She pressed her bronze shoulder against his arm while the tremulous ache of happiness inexpressible pervaded her. In his quivering nostrils and in his cloudy eyes, there was an answer, a perfect reciprocation. His throat swelled and contracted with that he could not express by voice or sign. One day man would sing arias of grand opera as a result of that obstruction of the vocal orifice.

"The big bitter water is good sign," he conveyed by signs, incapable of utterance because of the ache in his throat. "We will live by the bitter water. The fish are plenty. The sun does not burn. All is good sign for the mating moon."

Mating wolves would have sniffed the favorable air of a prospective den as did Kaa and Chee. Mating wolves would have turned to each other as they did and touched noses ever so tenderly and questingly.

"I am the mate of you, and you are the mate of me," she said in a series of deft gestures. Again they bent together, and the tips of their noses pressed in their kiss of love. Far keener were their olfactory senses than their senses of taste and touch. Although they possessed mental gifts analogous to man of all ages. By the nose alone either could have located the other among any number of their kind, all dressed alike, all looking much the same because of undeveloped individuality. Kaa would have found Chee in a crowd, not by the color of her gown, nor the way she wore her hair, but by unmistakable, yet delicately differentiated radiations of her particular spoor.

SO THE brown pair remained by the sea, having no care save for each other. These two were freed of the obligations of fealty, which were the irksome bondages of mankind in their day. She the favorite of Ag-Tar, therefore not fearing his wrath, and doubting the wrath of his gods; he the archenemy of Ag-Tar, knowing no allegiance to any man, on the contrary, determined to compel allegiance from man; both were as near the Utopia of freedom as life-forms possibly could be.

For them "no minstrel raptures swelled," but there were other and higher raptures. Drowsy days lolling in the cool shade of the giant ferns, or sunning upon the warm sand of the seashore, a feast anywhere for the taking, theatre unceasingly supplied by the myriad wild creatures on the stage of inimitable Nature; murmuring nights when the fear of the thousand jungle eyes was but a zest to close companionship, when the sky became a dazzling candelabra uneclipsed by all the White Ways of any civilization; these were among their higher raptures. The sun was kindly father of the day, and the moon sweet mother of the night. All the gamut of variety, upon which all civilized varieties would be based, was run in the space of a solar unit. Such was the mating moon of Kaa and Chee.

Disquieting revelations on either side were bound to come and insidiously undermine their perfect contentment. Yet, for several days neither alluded by sign or syllable to personal antecedents or circumstances which might affect their future or present relations. For the nonce they were blindly lost to all the past, remotely separate from everything of their world. Kaa's flame of hate smouldered unheeded, succumbing to the love-motive and, rebuilding itself in order to orientate the love-motive.

Happiness unbelievable had come to him out of the wild, bitter years of the pilgrimage when he had only vaguely conjectured such happiness. All he knew of Chee, the New Moon, was her name. That was all he cared to know, for in herself she was consummately sufficient. He thought her like the new moon for which she had been named, slender and beautifully proportioned, warm with the golden color of the moon and yet cool by the intervention of velvety night.

As for Chee, she did not dream of the mortal mission she had interrupted when she wooed the man with the horns by the pool.

Hate and death were far removed from her reactions. The home barrows were now only a faded memory picture, outshone by the glorious profusion of a whole world of brilliant pictures in the present. That the mate she had taken was the mortal enemy of Ag-Tar, her father, she had no idea, nor did Kaa let fall a hint as to the flame of ambition and vengeance inculcated in him by the tutelage and execution of his mother. Neither had any premonition of such harbingers of unrest. Only harsh facts could have shaken them at this moment from their paradise of bliss.

THE first of the inevitable revelations came the afternoon of the fourth day. To begin with, Chee had for the past two days been somewhat restless and troubled by misgivings she did not clearly visualize, yet was strongly affected by. Though she did not fear Ag-Tar, she comprehended his doubt of the man with horns, and she was aware that her absence from the clearing, and the trail-signs by the pool, might lead to unpleasant consequences if a searching detail chanced to surprise her and her mate. To eliminate possibility of such a surprise she frequently reconnoitred from the top of a tall tree. Kaa noted these actions, but he was wholly indifferent, placidly confident in his superior speed of limb to escape superior numbers and relying on his keen hearing to detect the stealthy footsteps of any enemy.

As she perched in the crest of a tall palm, Chee's observations were at length justified when she sighted a band of males led by Za-Kut, moving toward the sea from the direction of the tribal barrows. There was but one logical reason for the hunters moving in such close formation so many miles from the clearing. They were looking for the favorite daughter of Ag-Tar by the order of Ag-Tar and by the sanction of the lizard fetish.

Swiftly, Chee slid down the smooth trunk of her observatory and ran to Kaa, who was lying on the bank of a pool, deeply absorbed in snatching at the fish that darted hither and thither in the clear water.

At her sharp call, Kaa bounded up and leaped to her side, instantly on the alert for trouble.

"Za-Kut and the hunters come. They look for the mate of you," she imparted excitedly.

"Where come the hunters?" he signed rapidly.

She pointed.

"Do you wish that the hunters find you?" he asked.

"Where you go, I go," she replied.

"They are many, and I am one. I have no throwing stick. We will run, and who can catch us?"

The decision was immediately acted upon.

Running shoulder to shoulder, they set out toward the mouth of the river. Effortless, yet swift was their departure from the sea, silent as the flitting shadows they cast. The tread of their sure feet might have been the rustle of leaves it was so noiseless.

Upon reaching the bank of the bay forming the river's mouth, they turned north, maneuvering to flank the approaching hunters, whose position Kaa ascertained through Chee's observations. This they speedily accomplished in a spurt of splendid form and horselike speed, unseen and unheard under cover of the dense vegetation near the water's edge. As soon as Chee signed that she believed they had passed the hunters, Kaa slowed down to an easier pace which either could maintain for hours if necessary. In such a manner, on the alert for any straggling hunter, or for dangerous carnivora, they ran the re-

mainder of the afternoon, stopping twice to drink at fresh-water springs. The sun was beginning to throw out the long shadows presaging twilight when they reached a point almost halfway back to the barrows of the tribe. Then Kaa gave the sign to halt, and together they paused at the edge of the river, breathing easily, a slight flush on their faces the only sign that they had run almost twenty miles in less than two hours.

Kaa had not called a halt without a definite plan for further procedure. Uppermost in his mind was a desire to escape, for the period of the mating moon, the territory liable to surveillance by those looking for Chee, whose real identity, had he known it, would have perturbed him considerably more. He had observed that the river, at the place where they stopped, was fordable almost all the way across, there being only a short stretch near the western shore where swimming would be necessary.

"We will go to the side where the sun rises," he stated, pointing across the river. "The hunters can not follow where the water is deep."

AT FIRST Chee did not quite grasp what he proposed, since in her mind deep water was as impassable to Kaa as it was to their pursuers. But when by reiteration he made clear that they could and would safely cross the deep water, she objected in high consternation.

"Do not fear the deep water," he reasoned. "The mate of you will make the deep water good sign. Come. See."

But Chee persisted in her obdurate objections, and it was some time before Kaa at last overcame her timidity sufficiently so that she would follow him into the shallow water. After reconnoitering carefully to ascertain that no one observed them entering the open water, Kaa splashed into the shallows, Chee treading in his footsteps, shaking the hated water from her feet at every step, much as a cat traversing the yard after a rain storm.

All went well until the water began to deepen markedly, and the current to gain speed and manifest an undertow. From then on, Chee rapidly weakened, more and more reluctant in her advance. At last, when the water rose as high as her thighs, she balked, refusing to go a step farther. In vain Kaa coaxed and cajoled in an effort to get her into a swimming depth, where he intended to tow her across. But she would not move, and she was so frightened she could make no sound. The tug of the current at her legs paralyzed her with terror, and her imagination peopled the depths with all sorts of slimy, sinister perils.

Sorely tried by the stubbornness of his mate, Kaa signed that she should stand where she was and observe what he did, which command scarcely was necessary, seeing she was rooted to the spot, sick with fear and despair because of what she deemed a mere mad prank of an overconfident if beloved mate. Breasting the current, Kaa pushed out up to his neck and then began to swim. His strokes were swift, sure and powerful and the distance was no more than five times his length. Yet Chee was horrified to see his head floating there in the swift current. Expecting to see him swept away and submerged to certain death, her dismay was turned to wonder when she saw with what facility Kaa propelled himself across the unfordable depth. Here was the unperformable impossible being miraculously performed before her eyes. Here was a man with the wisdom of Nuk-Pu, the fish, partaking of the god-idea in his defiance and mastery of the tabu elements.

Transfixed in awe and incredulity, she saw Kaa pull his sleek, wet body upon the western shore, saw him turn and sign that he was coming back, that she should not fear. But as he plunged for the return swim, Chee experienced again that uncontrollable and stinging chill of dread. For a moment of agony she saw that he was completely engulfed, then she was encouraged to see his dark head burst from the water many feet nearer, the spray flying from his lips as he expelled his breath in a noisy hiss. But not until she saw that his feet had struck bottom was she relieved; even then she was pitifully distressed, standing in a half-crouched posture, half-submerged, shivering from contact with the cold water and from the aftermath of terror.

"See," said Kaa, wading up to her. "The deep water is good sign for the mate of you. I see the fishing birds fish in deep water. I learn from the fishing birds that the deep water is not tabu."

"The deep water will eat the mate of you," she returned fearfully. "The mate of you knows not the secret of the fishing birds."

He did not reply, but took her hand and led her firmly but slowly toward the deep water. She was reluctant as ever to enter it, yet she had witnessed Kaa's astounding feat, and she was proportionately assured

he could protect her. When the water was breast-deep, he turned to her. After brief meditation he placed her hands on his shoulders as she stood behind him, stating and repeating instructions that she should hold tightly to his shoulders and all would be well. Though Kaa never before had supported such a burden in the water, let alone propelled it, yet necessity had driven him to the conclusion that if the fishing birds swam with large fish in their beaks, then he could swim a short distance with Chee on his back. Lacking sufficient knowledge of the effects of inertia upon aquatic propulsion, he unwittingly placed himself in an awkward position in the manner in which he had instructed Chee to attach herself to him.

KAA now resumed his advance, Chee having obtained a tight grip upon his shoulders, and clinging there while she gasped with the chill of the slowly rising water. Fear tended to tighten her grip on Kaa, and in that respect there was no danger of them being separated. But the instant Kaa kicked his feet free of the bottom and began to swim, Chee's struggles proved disastrous indeed. Her grip shifted from shoulders to neck, as she struggled to get out of the water, until at last she succeeded in climbing upon his back, clutching his head in the frenzied embrace of one in fear of drowning.

Kaa was promptly submerged by Chee's frantic efforts to emerge. The first ducking of her life Chee received when she sank her only support by her own weight and struggles. But Kaa's strong swimming forced Chee's head above the water again, though he, himself, did not succeed in rising. Previous training in under-water swimming now served Kaa well indeed. Had he not retained perfect presence of mind he might have been strangled then and there, or hopelessly exhausted in futile, maddened struggles. As it was, he held what breath he had, swimming as never before, fighting gamely for every foot of progress against a current that was sweeping him downstream, and against the inertia of Chee's weight and the choking effect of the grip she had obtained on his neck.

Once more Chee went under as Kaa sank still deeper. This time, fortunately for Kaa, Chee inhaled enough water to render her somewhat stunned and unable to continue her struggles, though her grip was in nowise weakened. Kaa consequently made more progress, and at length, while still submerged, he struck bottom. For some distance he crawled up the bank under water, lungs bursting for air, dragging Chee after him. After a seeming interminable time, in which his lungs were congested with an imminent explosion, he at last broke the surface, gasped in a fresh breath and hauled Chee to the safety of the long grass above the water line.

The struggle had unnerved and exhausted him by its violence, together with his terror at the unforeseen difficulties involved. He had experienced a horror entirely new to him and his kind—that of a living body implacably clinging to the neck of the swimmer and dragging him down to certain death. Yet he was overjoyed to find that Chee still was alive, if convulsed with paroxysms of coughing and retching. He wanted to help her, soothe her, but there was nothing he knew to do but squat down before her with solicitous regard until she recovered naturally.

Chee had swallowed enough salt water to develop a deadly nausea, and recovery from this was even more distressing than from the obstructed lungs. When the attack was over she was pale and haggard, but rapidly regaining normal strength. At length she arose unsteadily to her feet, and, after a shuddering contemplation of the deep water through which she had so miraculously passed and retained life, she became cheerful enough to touch noses with Kaa for a brief interval. After that they set out together into the jungle in search of a likely place in which to pass the night, which was close upon them.

After an extensive search they located a deep hollow under a huge windfall of trees and brush over which vines and mosses had formed a thick tangle. They made a meal on the tender shoots of rhizomes and a small animal, between a rabbit and a rat, perhaps an agouti, which Kaa caught in his hands after a chase.

Sitting there before the hollow under the windfall, they watched the shadows deepen as night came on. Kaa was aroused to a new train of ideas by the enforced flight from the males of Ag-Tar. Only the mating moon withheld him from completing his long-meditated work of vengeance, and when Chee was ready to settle down in a barrow he intended going on with his plans for wresting the kingship from Ag-Tar. Already he was deliberating a readjustment of his plans that would take care of Chee, wholly ignorant that her identity would render futile any designs he might forecast.

FOR some time Chee remained dubious concerning her miracle-making mate. She could not get over a vast wonder at his ability to propel himself in deep water, and more than that, transport her across it alive. Only repeated nose rubbings reassured her as to his fleshly genera, together with the fact that no matter how carefully she examined him she could find no hidden fins or web-feet.

"We will go to the cliffs across the plains where I lived with the mother of me," he made known his plans for the next day, with the idea of locating a runway for the mating moon that was least accessible to the hunters looking for Chee.

"Tell me of the mother of you," she requested, wonderingly. "Tell me of the cliffs in the sunrise. Tell me why you put the horns of Dong-Ga upon the head of you."

They touched noses, whereupon he began his story obligingly, relating the outstanding facts in his elocutionary manner. She was wholly unprepared for the featuring of Ag-Tar, her father, and as Kaa proceeded through the tutelage of hate and the oath of vengeance, told how O-Wa had been slain by Ag-Tar, and how he had only waited until his last teeth had come before retaliating, she was plunged into sorrow and dread. But she did not interrupt the story.

Whatever she might say she thought likely to reveal her actual identity. Before Kaa's revelations she had had no tangible reason for telling him what she was to Ag-Tar; now she had a tangible reason for not telling him. This fierce, young male who swam like Nuk-Pu, the fish, and ran like the wind, was now revealed to be as terrible in his hate as he was wonderful in his love.

Chee shivered as he heaped invective upon the head of her father, and she grew sad as he prophesied how she would sit alongside him in the great barrow of the Old Man.

When Kaa had finished his story, and had lapsed into a moody silence, his hate flaming anew in aroused recollection, Chee still had made no sign in the influence she might have upon his foreshadowings. She did not know what to do in the situation. She had not dreamed that the man with the horns was the arch-enemy of her father. Yet, now that she did know, her preference for Kaa was unchanged. She saw the cause of his hate, saw that it was just; besides, filial love was an emotion far less compelling than nuptial love. The young of the wild soon forget the parent. Yet, she was a woman, and being a woman, with all the ideals of man, she was not wholly wild.

She could not give up Kaa, nor could she quite turn against her father. In the blood and bone of her was the instinct to favor her house and the head of her house. Only the mate-call could have moved her to countenance an enemy of her father. Thus was she torn between two loves, two honors, two fetishes. And she had no precedent to act upon. This complication of motives and forces was beyond her ability to cope with decisively. Yet, already she was instinctively turning toward woman's eternal subterfuge, conciliation or compromise.

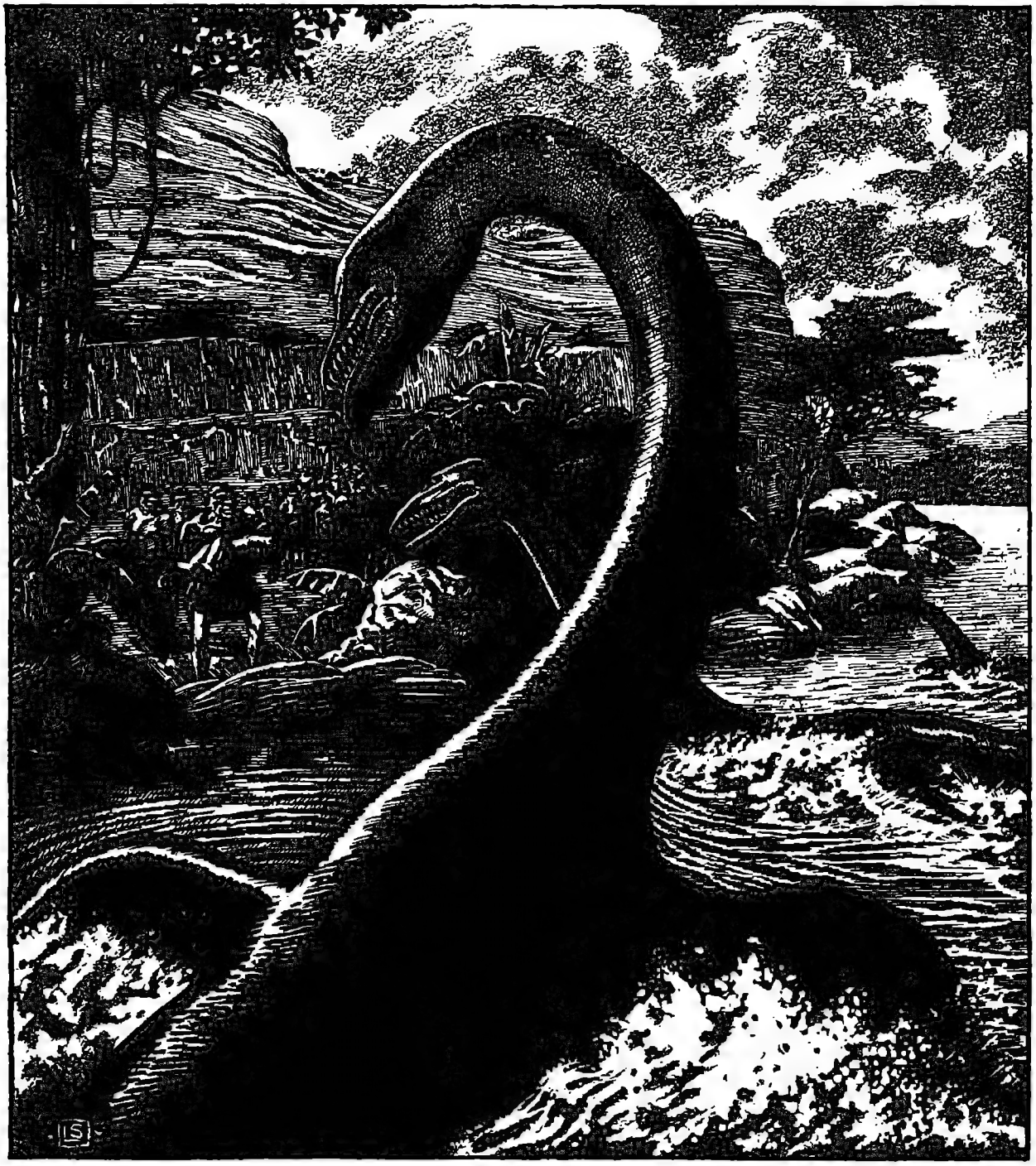
"Chee is sad," said Kaa, as he tried to fathom the murky eyes that peered unseeingly into the gloom of the jungle. "Why is the mate of Kaa sad? The mate of Kaa will be the mate of the Old Man of the tribe when the mating moon is gone."

She bent her head, shrinking away as he leaned nearer.

Something searing and hot stabbed from heart to brain as in his mind's eye Kaa glimpsed the looming form of dark suspicion. He dared not speak of the vague misgivings suddenly shaking his confidence in Chee. His eyes were like the eyes of the sabre-tooth shining upon her from the shadowy outlines of his leonine head. She felt the fury of hate and death in him; and she was afraid to tell him the truth, afraid that he would kill her. But she was inept in the ways of deep deception, and she could not wholly hide her secret, though she spoke not of it.

For moments of agony she endured his probing for that he apprehended. An overwhelming impulse came over her to tell him that she was the daughter of Ag-Tar, that she could not sincerely enjoin his contemplated conquest of the Old Man's throne. It was as if the tense silence and Kaa's searching eyes compelled confession, no matter what the absolution, whether blood or the milk of mercy. Motives vague, yet appalling, swirled up to protect her secret.

Dim, indeed, was her differentiation between right and wrong, yet even she could see that the Old Man was evil, that the sign of the lizard was evil, and that Kaa was good, and the sign of the bison was good. But if Kaa knew he might destroy her in sudden wrath, or if she prevailed upon him to conciliate his wrongs, then the people would go on in the bloody fetish of the lizard, continuing to feed their



A hundred throats joined in a mighty groan of anguish as the monster arose

young to the bad sign. She did not clearly weigh and tabulate any of this; it was a monstrous and complex thing, moving her even against her will into a mood of higher decision. And so, fear of Kaa was not the only reason she did not tell him who she was, and fear was not the only motive that at length gave her strength to allay his suspicions with the kiss of the nose.

Later, through the dark hours, Kaa drowsed unknowing in the half-sleep of his kind, dreaming nightmares of the death-duel with Ag-Tar, and the daughter of the bad sign lay staring wide-eyed into the blackness of the jungle night, that was as unfathomable as the future.

AFTER the night in the deadfall retreat, Kaa's suspicions of Chee were entirely vanished. Whatever feelings he had concerning her strange reactions to his life story, and to his declaration of life purpose, he relegated to a conclusion that she had been merely frightened for his sake in

her mind-pictures of the death-duel he purposed with the lord of the tribe. He arose, eager to be off to the east rim and the tomb of O-Wa, which he had not once visited throughout the pilgrimage owing to superstitious fear of the tomb and the lonely environs of his youth's habitat. Now, Chee by his side, warm love filling his veins with new strength and daring, he looked forward with keen anticipation to his visit to the rim.

They breakfasted along the way upon the juicy haunch of a young wild hog, which Kaa knocked over with a stone. Chee's spirits rose with the sun and with the appeasing of her appetite. Gloomy foreboding for the dim future could not ferment the elixir of joy that surcharged her blood in the delightful present.

Travelling leisurely, with frequent deviations to confuse their trail, the two reached the edge of the plains by night. Kaa no longer was troubled concerning the pursuit of the hunters. He knew the valley as the mathematician knows an axiom, therefore he knew the hunters could not cross the river without making a long detour north to the shallows fronting the site of an abandoned village, where he had passed many a night during the pilgrimage. Moreover, he had come to comprehend to full extent the power over the hunters he had in his ability to swim, and he divined the males would give up the chase as soon as they found the spoor vanishing in unfordable waters. That the brown pair had drowned would by such sign be unquestionably obvious to those knowing nothing of swimming.

A den in the wall of a ravine, abandoned long since by a giant wolf, Kaa selected as a suitable tavern in which to pass the night with his bride. While they rested in the soft grass before the den, he discussed the situation with Chee in as clear terms as was possible for him. She answered when necessary, with evasions when he broached dangerous topics, couching each expression to eliminate any possibility of rearousing his suspicions. Confronted by a direct interrogation as to the determination with which the males would pursue her, she answered:

"Many males wish to mate with the mate of you. It is why they look for me. It is why they would kill you if they found us."

His eyes gleamed dangerously with a flare of jealousy, and she thrilled with this strong proof of his staunch love for her. The snarl that curled his lips away from his strong, even teeth was not in her eyes hideous or repellent, but beautiful in its promise of faithful, life-long protection.

"When Kaa is Old Man of the tribe the hunters will not chase the mate of Kaa," he prophesied grimly. "Then will the hunters make the sign of gachu to the mate of me."

Chee did not reveal that already the males had made the sign of *gachu* to the first daughter of the lizard. Instead, she signed:

"Will the mate of me kill the old women and the sick children when he is Old Man of the tribe?"

"It is woo-ga to kill the weak people who are good," he returned. "Only the bad shall die. Kaa was a sick child. Now Kaa is strong. The unnamed man-child of Ka-Mot and O-Wa shall be strongest of all the males who were not sick children."

"Ag-Tar is weak and old. You will kill a toothless one when you kill Ag-Tar, the Old Man."

He seemed puzzled at this. At first he could not grasp its import. To reinstate his former conceptions and verify them, he imparted: "Ag-Tar is not old and weak. Ag-Tar is strongest of the hunters. Ag-Tar killed the father of me and the mother of me. Only Kaa will be stronger than the Old Man when the death-duel comes."

"Ag-Tar was strong when he killed the father of you in the death-duel," she explained. "Now Ag-Tar is weak. The teeth of him are gone. You will kill a weak, old man when you kill Ag-Tar."

Now he was still more puzzled. Possible decadence of his enemy had not hitherto occurred to him. He spoke slowly: "The Old Man is toothless. The Old Man is king of the people. I do not understand."

"From the unknown comes the power of Ag-Tar," Chee told him. "When the mate of you was a baby Ag-Tar shook the earth and made the water leap. From the leaping water came Ki-Va-Go to eat the people because they did not feed him. Ag-Tar gave the children to Ki-Va-Go. The people were very much afraid, but Ag-Tar was not afraid. When the people disobey, Ag-Tar makes the sign of the lizard. Then Ki-Va-Go comes from the deep water to eat the people. Then they must feed the bad sign that can not be killed. That is why Ag-Tar is Old Man of the people when he has no teeth."

"When the earth shakes it is bad sign," said Kaa in a brown study. "Many moons ago I feel the earth shake and the water leap. Ag-Tar does not make the earth shake and the water leap. From the big

rocks comes the power that makes the earth shake, from the unknown hiding in the big rocks. Ki-Va-Go is not bad sign like the shaking earth. Ki-Va-Go is not stronger than Kaa, the Unnamed. With the throwing stick I slay Ki-Va-Go in the big bitter water." He arose in his excited earnestness to convey his meaning. He demonstrated by pantomime how he had slain the plesiosaurs with his improved throwing stick, the spear, how he had found the vulnerable spots in the armor of the plesiosaur.

CHEE was vividly impressed and exultant. When Kaa squatted by her again, she said: "The people can not kill Ki-Va-Go. They have no good throwing sticks. When you slay Ki-Va-Go and the people see, then will the power of the Old Man be no more; then will Kaa, the mate of me, be Old Man of the people, father of all the hunters."

"It shall be," he promised, broodingly.

"You will not slay the old and toothless. Ag-Tar is old and toothless. Will you slay him who can not fight in the death-duel?"

Again Kaa was nonplussed by an unusual combination of mind-pictures that failed to harmonize with the hate pictures. "Woo-ga, Ag-Tar," he growled stubbornly. "Ag-Tar killed the father of me and the mother of me. Kaa will slay Ag-Tar, the Old Man."

Chee said no more. She knew that a doubt had come into his mind, and for the time she was satisfied. In him was sown the seed of mercy in the soil of causations for mercy supplied by her subtle persuasion. Kaa was disturbed by new and puzzling motivations. Incertitude was in his troubled eyes and silent, moving lips. Nor could he suspicion her motives. Wiser men than he would willingly surrender before the weapons of woman. He could not comprehend how irresistibly he was drawn into compromise for the life of Ag-Tar, while still urged to supersede the Old Man in authority. Love, religion and politics were in the running, and Chee would not rest in her cunning manipulation of one against the other for the proportionate good of father, husband and society.

Early next morning they were aroused from their one-eyed slumber by the snuffings and scratchings of a roaming sabre-tooth at the brush in the mouth of the den, which Kaa had placed there in lieu of boulders. Kaa prepared himself for battle, but the strong whiff of a herd of peccaries, borne down wind at the crucial moment, deterred the big cat from tearing down the brush barricade. Chee-Pe, the peccary, was of unquestioned deliciousness, and Chee-Pe did not offer stubborn resistance like the lemur kind. Besides, man-meat was, at best, of doubtful flavor. U-Puk promptly decided upon the peccaries. With a parting growl, as if to leave an impression that fear had not thwarted him, the tiger leaped up the wall of the ravine and vanished in the shrubbery of the jungle fringe.

THE narrow escape from the sabre-tooth having completely aroused them, Kaa and Chee crawled out of the burrow and got an early start across the plains in the long journey to the east rim. Late in the afternoon, after several long and exhausting sprints in detouring the savage diatrymas, they reached the heterogeneous maze of ravines and lava formations comprising the foothills, or approaches, to the volcanic cliffs. Instantly, Kaa detected a marked change in the topography which he was wholly unable to account for.

He was as certain he had made no mistake in his bearings as he was that Chee tramped at his heels. And soon he was further set to rights in this respect by discerning the indenture of the sunken ledge on the wall of the lower terrace. He had not gone astray in his calculations of the location. This was the place where he had passed his boyhood. It was the place, itself, that had gone wrong.

Over the age-hardened lava that formed the fumaroles and ridges a recent exudation had formed in cooled streams of basalt, speckled with a mixture of other substances. Everywhere these dark streams had sought the lower levels and indentations, solidifying in the process of flowing from the centre of eruption. Deeper and broader grew the petrified rivers as Kaa and Chee neared the cliffs. Ahead, Kaa observed, over the spot where the lake should have been, wisps of steam rising along the wall of the terrace in intermittent gusts of varying density.

"Woo-ga, I do not understand," he grunted, stooping to examine one of the formations of recently cooled basalt. "The black stone comes from the unknown. I saw not the black stone when I lived here with the mother of me."

His steps quickened with his anxiety as he neared the location of the lake, but his expectant eyes detected no familiar gleam of the sun on clear water, nor did he see any of the grotesque diving birds perched

on the obsidian banks. There was no sign of life about, and presently he stood amazed and uneasy before the spot where the little lake had reposed. There was not a trace of water remaining. In the place of the crystal depths was a black mass of mixed basalt, layer upon layer, as it had pushed out from under the cliff.

Near the base of the terrace, where the underground passage had formerly opened under the water, the dark mass still was viscous and partly liquid, bubbling occasionally from the heat of other still incandescent masses struggling for freedom from compression. It was from this boiling center that the clouds of steam were issuing as the spring of water that had formerly fed the lake was transformed into vapor by the molten matter.

"Here was the little sweet water where the fishing birds taught me to fish in deep water," said Kaa, pointing confoundedly at the tar-pool. "No water is here. The fishing birds are not here."

Near the edge of the pool the basalt had cooled on the surface. Numerous scorpions, snails and salamanders had been caught in the substance before solidification. The surface was littered by dead life-forms that had been inextricably mired while the eructated matter was in a sticky state. Curiously and cautiously, Kaa stepped out upon the hardened crust, disregarding Chee's warning guttural. However, he took only three short steps before the crust gave way like a rubber sponge, and with a yell of terror, Kaa leaped back to shore.

"Burn! Burn!" he snarled, dancing about upon first one and then the other of his singed feet. "Woo-ga, the black stone that moves."

Chee retreated, signing that she was dubious of remaining any longer near such a vicious substance. Kaa willingly limped after her upon his blistered feet, and began looking for the fumarole in which he had entombed the body of O-Wa. But, though he was certain he remembered exactly where he had made the interment, yet he was unable to find any sign of the tomb remaining. The same excretion that had substituted the lake had buried the tomb beyond all his power to excavate it.

MOURNFULLY he regarded that portion of the black mass under which he was certain lay the body of his mother. He could not accept this vanishment of the tomb with philosophical calm; to him it was as if the unknown had robbed him of a precious possession. In pictures he remembered, but the thrill of the picture was in the actual existence of the subject of the picture. His memory of the tomb was all that remained of O-Wa. It had been definite, but the disappearance of the reality of it relegated the tomb to indefinacy. Therefore was he afflicted with new loss, a repetition of grief.

Chee mourned in sympathy as she saw him beat his breast in an agony of disappointment. She could not perceive all the causation of his sorrow, nor visualize all the sacred memories that were to him buried in this hallowed spot. Kaa was alone in his grief, but he did not lack for mute sympathy in the woman by his side.

Turning away from the obliterated tomb, Kaa betook himself to the fissure which led to the sunken ledge. This he found unaffected by the eruption, and he was somewhat heartened thereby. Up the winding trail he led Chee over the worn footholds which he remembered so vividly. It seemed to him but yesterday that the males had charged up the trail at the order of Ag-Tar. Time could never dim the vision in his mind, for time to him was nothing, nor would he accumulate any mass of intervening thought-pictures with which to obscure his vivid memory of a few important pictures.

Upon reaching the sunken ledge Chee fell to examining with great curiosity the strange barrow where her mate had been reared in a still more strange manner. And all the while, as Kaa eagerly pointed out and explained this and that, he was reliving the mad hours of the tutelage of hate, and sadly contemplating the happy hours of the tutelage of love, which he never again could experience. He snarled as he indicated the scarred tracery of Ag-Tar's visage that still remained on the roof of the ledge. Chee was as terrified by it as O-Wa had been. It was difficult for him to explain how he had accomplished this likeness of the Old Man, until he picked up a sharp piece of stone and, before her eyes, drew the head of a bison in crude outline. Again he lived moments of supreme peril, when he showed Chee the plinth of quartz from which he had made his first and last high dive on the day of O-Wa's execution.

"It is good sign," was all he could say while they looked out over the parapet that had guarded him when he was a baby.

Then they squatted and repeated the inveterate nose touching.

Much of the seething emotion in Kaa, aroused by this résumé of the past, Chee

could sense, though she could not partake in it. His reaction to things of the past, absent in visible or audible expression in other males, was to Chee only another wonder among all the wonders he had revealed to her—wonders of creed and deed, wonders of love and motivation. She was deeply satisfied to follow in his footsteps wherever he would go, to see with his eyes the unfathomable things of the unknown. And she was more than satisfied in anticipation of the new life that beckoned in the good sign of Dong-Ga. Even in her was the yearning for a higher faith. And now that she squatted with the prophet of a higher faith, in the sacred sanctums of the birth of that faith, she was immeasurably moved and given to profound, if aimless and abstruse, meditation.

Even Ag-Tar's life she had not grudged this wonder male but for the fact that she was the recipient of the atom of love in the heart of the Old Man. Chee could not resign herself to such a sacrifice to whatever kinder gods that might demand such a sacrifice. All the favors heaped upon her by the Old Man, all the hours he had petted her and was thus kind to her, as he had been kind to no other, were now being repaid in full by a faithful and grateful daughter.

FOR several weeks they remained in the vicinity of the tar-pool and the geyser of steam, not out of preference for the environment itself, but out of a desire for absolutely safety from intrusion. On the ledge they slept the deep sleep of the barricaded barrow and bounteously feasted on the tender flesh of the young desert horses which Kaa brought in from the plain.

Sometimes, while Chee slept upon the ledge, Kaa busied himself with the manufacture of a number of throwing sticks similar to the one he had left by the pool near the village. These spears he demonstrated to Chee, greatly amazing her by their vast superiority in deadliness and accuracy over any weapon possessed by the tribe of Ag-Tar.

When she asked him why it was he made more than one spear he explained that one was of no use unless there were time to retrieve it. With a great number of spears he could make many casts at an enemy superior in number without being required to come into dangerous contact with the foe. His reasoning, he further explained, had been based upon the facts she had imparted concerning the fetish of the lizard, which might cause a pitched battle between him and the tribesmen when he attempted to dethrone the aged Ag-Tar.

By various subtly designed conversations Chee steadily gained her point concerning Ag-Tar and the death-duel. She beguiled him in his moments of comparative tenderness. Already Kaa had approached the exercising of mercy in his resolves to rescind the law of death to the unfit. From such a general idea of mercy it was not an impossible transition to the specific idea of mercy. O-Wa had taught Kaa the creed of hate out of parental love; now Chee amended that teaching with a variant creed out of filial love. Ka-Mot's death was to be avenged by physical death in the first tutelage; in the second, the death blow attained a different significance, relative to spiritual death, which would ensue if Ag-Tar were dethroned and allowed to live while bemoaning his dethronement.

But there was no altruism in the motive of Chee in promulgating this idea of bloodless vengeance. She worked from selfish reactions. Ag-Tar must live, because from Ag-Tar she had obtained pleasant things, but Kaa must be Old Man of the tribe nevertheless. She could not desert the man she loved for the bestiality of her father and his god-idea, nor could she, on the other hand, turn traitor to her father in being an accessory to bodily injury. The killer of Ag-Tar would be her blood enemy, and as such, tabu as a lord of her home barrow. But he who took from Ag-Tar that which it was his right to take would not necessarily be tabu.

Many times Chee was thwarted by the grain of hate inculcated by O-Wa, but as many times she came back persistently, and with increasing wiles as she detected how Kaa slowly weakened in her favor.

"The Old Man can not kill you. Ag-Tar is old and weak," was the way her argument ran. "You will not slay the old and weak. It is bad sign. The good sign of Dong-Ga is the sign of life, not the sign of death. Did the good sign slay you and the mother of you? When the people see the wonder that is in the good sign, when the males see the throwing sticks that kill far away, when they see the things you make upon the stone, when you slay Ki-Va-Go, the bad sign, with the throwing sticks, then Ag-Tar will see that you are stronger. When Kaa is father of all the hunters, then Ag-Tar will growl and bite himself in his barrow. Then will Ka-Mot, the father of you, be glad in the long sleep. Then will O-Wa, the mother of you, be happy."

Kaa succumbed to this culminative plea of the controversy. "The new time has now come," he said. "The good sign is stronger than the strongest hunters. The death-duel is not stronger than the scratching on the stone. I will slay Ki-Va-Go, the bad sign. I will make the sign of Dong-Ga on the stone for the people to see. Then the people will know that great strength is in men from the good sign. Ag-Tar will live to see Kaa, the Unnamed, do this. I will not slay Ag-Tar, the Old Man."

He could not know that by this decision he had advanced a step in social progress, that he had sounded the knell for the passing of the ancient death-duel as the rite of succeeding kings. He had no notions of posterity, or the effect of anything he did upon posterity. Individualism was his philosophy. It pleased his vanity to allow Ag-Tar to live, and further, it pleased Chee whom he loved. She had infused her mind-pictures with his previous mind-pictures of vengeance, and by the fusion a more subtle type of vengeance had been wrought, and a font of mercy opened by such bifurcation as man's vanity and woman's filial fidelity.

The weeks lengthened to months with that rapidity which attends the experiencing of happiness in its higher degrees. They wandered back to the jungle in the waning of the mating moon. Chee now bore upon her back a bundle of throwing sticks made by the wizard stone-worker. The imminence of a new moon to supersede the mating moon was suffusing Kaa with great restlessness.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF THE GODS

DEEP gloom enshrouded all the tribe of Ag-Tar, save for the unmated maidens, who were unaccountably contented. Though it was the eating time, and all should have been stupidly content upon full stomachs, still melancholy prevailed. The young hunters nursed individual grouches, that broke forth in petty bickerings among themselves, and Ag-Tar, upon his throne of boulders, gazed sullenly into the central fire where a number of leg bones were roasting in the embers.

Chee was gone. The pride of the Old Man, she whom alone he loved, the coveted of the young men and the envy of the girls, had vanished, and moons of hoping and searching had not revealed her, living or dead. All signs led to the belief that she was dead. For had not Za-Kut trailed Chee and one other to deep water, and was not deep water fatal to those whose spoor vanished in it?

At Ag-Tar's feet lay the one tangible sign as to the circumstances attending Chee's disappearance. It was an ornate spear, the one left by Kaa at the pool where he encountered Chee. Significance of the inexplicable had been this wondrous work of the stone and wood artisan. To the ignorant the flying machine may be the machination of a devil; to the tribe of Ag-Tar this spear was the handiwork of one in league with the fearful unknown, with which, so far, they had associated only evil and unalterable decrees of evil. And when the man with the horns was associated with the spear as its previous possessor, the significance of evil agency in the vanishing of Chee was consummate.

Years had passed since the manifestation of the bad sign, and the rites of that sign had become traditional with the tribe. After the distribution of meat, oration, or sacrifice pertaining to the fetish of the lizard, and its various ramifications, was anticipated. So accomplished a mountebank the Old Man had become, so indefatigably had he pursued his probings of the bad sign, that in his great infirmity of mind and body, he had come almost to believe himself a genuine representative of the unknown. But the man with the horns ever had been a weak spot in the armor of protective fetishes and self-assurances. The man with the horns exemplified that which was out of control and unsubduable. A self-evident result of such uncontrollable agency was the suspected abduction of Chee, the New Moon.

Literally shaking off the foreboding of the hour by a horselike vibration of the entire body, Ag-Tar bent his age-emaciated frame and took hold of the spear. He did so with ill-concealed trepidation. Never having used such a weapon (always he had used throwing sticks like one-way boomerangs), he could not wholly fathom this strange invention, which was evidence of superior intelligence in its creator. He arose slowly to his feet, holding the spear at arm's length, eyeing it askance, as if he feared it would suddenly come to life and jump at him.

"Ki-Va-Go is angry," began Ag-Tar, speaking almost entirely in sound symbols, since new words had been coined owing to the lizard fetish. "The bad sign that can not be slain has eaten the first daughter of Ag-Tar. In the hand of Ag-Tar is

the throwing stick of the man with the horns. Woo-ga, the man with the horns. He took away the daughter of Ki-Va-Go. But Ki-Va-Go was angry. The bad sign has eaten Chee and the man with the horns."

He paused, collecting his wits for further parley, while allowing the tribe to assimilate the preamble.

IN THE interval following the barking gutturals of the Old Man, one of sharp eyes, watching the foliage on the south side of the clearing, might have detected an almost imperceptible oscillation of the vegetation, where four dark eyes peered through the lacy leaves and branches. Though the ears that belonged to the eyes could not have distinguished what the speaker had said, it was plain that the eyes were in nowise ineffectual at such a distance.

Wholly unaware of any unseen observers, Ag-Tar resumed, and continued for some time, his bold, if somewhat querulous oration, concluding thus:

"Ki-Va-Go eats the people when the people disobey. Chee disobeyed. Chee went with the man with the horns. The man with the horns is not of us. The man with the horns hunts with the children of the forest. When Ki-Va-Go comes the Old Man will ask him for Chee, the New Moon, whom he has eaten. Make way for Ag-Tar, who goes to feed the bad sign that can not be slain. Make way for the Old Man who will feed the bad sign that knows the Old Man and will speak with him."

The rite of sacrifice being frequently subsequent to orations, the tribe evinced no surprise at this command, though there was considerable trepidation among several of the women, doubtless owing to the fact that Za-Kut and Pu-Mok had laid hold upon four children.

Obediently the tribe opened ranks, forming a broad lane, walled by naked bodies, and leading down to the river bank, where a large space was bared of grass by the tramping and scuffing of calloused feet year after year.

Ag-Tar replaced the spear by his throne with great care, flinching once as he thought he detected a hint of volition in the glinting of the crystal head. He then secured an armload of meat from a heap of venison set aside from the daily bag for such purposes. Carrying the meat, the Old Man set out for the river bank, walking stiffly. Behind him, requiring no instructions because of frequent rehearsals of the rôles, Za-Kut and Pu-Mok, the sub-kings, joined in the march, each leading two children, who apparently had only recently learned to walk and were happily unconscious of what was to ensue.

It was a gruesome procession, indeed, and in it might have been seen the entire pageant of civilization from inception to day of judgment. Always the god-idea, and the ceaseless champing at the bit of human limitation would furnish causation for ceremony and sacrifice, though the stage would change. The age-bowed, shrivelled Old Man, wretched in toothless dotage, yet sinister notwithstanding by the prerogatives vested in him, was the spectre of dogma and oppression. Za-Kut and Pu-Mok, hulking of body and bestial of countenance, were the parasites of oppression, the smirking sycophants of power. Wrought in sharp contrast were the plump, ruddy forms of the children, typifying youth strolling unwittingly into the industrial abattoir.

The mass of the tribe was the proletariat, crowded with illusions, quaking with fear of being eaten, subjugated for lack of individuality. And at the jungle fringe hovered the deific individualists, shot with the passion of philanthropic reform, fired by the celestial soul-gropings of the true nobility. Bluntly, the scene was one of stark brutality, yet it would have aroused pity in the magnanimous. For these were little less than the Hebrew savages for whom the Christ exhorted: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do."

REACHING the spot on the bank which served as the altar, Ag-Tar came to a halt. Before him stretched the river to the bluish loom of verdure on the opposite shore. Near the middle of the stream a dark, snakish head was visible. Upon observing the head the Old Man's lips moved in a soundless series of syllables. The one head vanished in a circle of widening ripples. Two similar heads appeared close by. Alternately, these heads appeared and disappeared, confusing as to the actual number of separate heads. These were the plesiosaurs, diving and rising for air as they sported in the deep.

Bending to his knees, which signalled the kneeling of the entire tribe and the sub-kings, Ag-Tar made the sign of fealty to the lizard, this also being mimicked by the tribe. Then, from his kneeling position the Old Man tossed a piece of meat into the water, where it floated half-sub-

merged, there being no bone in the flesh and a great deal of fat.

For only a brief time the bait remained unmolested. Then the depths were disturbed by the inrush of long, shadowy bodies as the sharks came in. Dark dorsal fins sheared the surface. A white belly burst to view as one of these scavengers of all the ages turned over and struck. The meat vanished between snapping jaws, whereupon Ag-Tar tossed in another portion of meat, mumbling some imprecation directed at the hungry sharks.

By whatever means messages are certainly conveyed among aquatic life-forms, the plesiosaurs learned that the feast was ready. Though the sharks got the second bait of meat, when the third was thrown out they all had vanished as if by preconcerted signal.

That there was a natural cause for the disappearance of the sharks soon was manifest. The snaky heads no longer were visible in the middle of the river. From the spot where they last had been seen were discernible three water wakes, rapidly lengthening in the direction of the altar, formed by the ponderous strokes of huge flippers and the foaming rush of heavy, submerged bodies.

With trembling haste the Old Man threw the balance of the venison into the water and backed away to his sub-kings. One of the children began to cry a little from the dreadfulness of the occasion, which it somehow had sensed. The complaining child Ag-Tar selected for the first offering, and he laid his hands upon it in readiness.

A miniature eruption occurred as the foremost water wake reached the bank, and the monster rose to the surface. A hundred throats joined in a groan of anguish upon seeing the monster's hideous head shoot up out of the water upon the towering, goose-like neck. Some of the women sounded the wail of death as the reptile bent its head and began suggestively devouring the appetizers of venison.

The other two plesiosaurs followed quickly upon the appearance of the first. They, too, pushed forward hungrily. Having been many times fed, they had come to expect food at this particular place, therefore not straying far from it, as fish will haunt the spot where refuse is frequently thrown into the water.

While the plesiosaurs devoured the venison, the four dark eyes at the north edge of the clearing became two separate sets of eyes and emerged silently into the open. Two lithe, brown forms, male and female, now paused, or rather poised, some distance from the northern point of the half moon in which the tribe was formed. At any other time the keen senses of the tribe would instantly have detected the newcomers, but in the semi-hypnosis of heathen litany, their senses were dulled, all olfactory radiations swallowed up in the rank odor of the plesiosaurs.

Possibly the intruders would after all have been quickly discovered had not the strident voice of the Old Man thundered in the deep silence that hung over the clearing following the outcries caused by the first appearance of the plesiosaurs.

"Gachu, Ki-Va-Go! Gachu, Ki-Va-Go!" was the stentorian bellow of the Old Man.

From the fear-constricted throats of the populace came a fainter echo: "Gachu, gachu, Ki-Va-Go!"

The Old Man lifted the first offering and took one step toward the edge of the bank, where the plesiosaurs were now idling by languid undulations of flippers, jaws opening and closing as they stretched their necks toward the offering.

The unobserved forms now broke suddenly into a swift sprint toward the altar. Scarcely had the tribe been apprised of their coming before they had leaped to a stop before the priest of the lizard and his squirming sacrifice.

KAA'S and Chee's appearance could not have been better timed. It was as if the bad sign of the unknown had magically produced the missing from the elements of air and water. Especially were Ag-Tar and the sub-kings horrified by this sudden manifestation.

Eyes blazing under the arresting crown of horns and bison hair, Kaa confronted the druidic convocation like some apparition from the bowels of the earth. He had no need of demanding attention and respect; that he had in the consternation his unheralded appearance had incited. Chee, too, contributed to the chilling of every spine, as she stood by the side of the horned man, as if raised from the dead.

Before any could regain presence of mind, either to attack or to retreat, Kaa flung up both arms and thundered in a voice that rushed over the clearing like a blast of wind, shivering the bones of all in its devastating path: "Woo-ga, the bad sign of Ki-Va-Go. Kaa, the Unnamed, brings the good sign of Dong-Ga. The

good sign brings Kaa and the lost Chee to the tribe of Ag-Tar. Chee is the mate of Kaa, who is to be Old Man of the people."

Instantly, the horns gained definite and dread significance of something besides speed of foot and jungle-craft; they bespoke the foreordained conqueror. Dark augury of the unknown was in this interruption of the rite of the bad sign.

The Old Man first recovered himself by an almost superhuman control of withering guilt and fear. The primal instinct of crush and throttle rose up in him. Charlatan subterfuge no longer was efficacious. The veil of sham was rent. Only the power of thews and fangs remained to sustain him. Summoning a ferocious snarl, Ag-Tar bared the snags of teeth still remaining in his gums. Vicious as a wolf caught red-jawed among the sheep, he faced Kaa, while the child fell from his nerveless hands and toddled away to a mother who was stretching out her arms for it.

Za-Kut and Pu-Mok likewise freed the children they were holding as they prepared for battle, and, slightly behind Ag-Tar, they began a stealthy advance upon the challenger. Kaa's misgivings had not been without grounds. No longer was Ag-Tar alone in protection of his sovereignty. Political favors had been conferred and the conferees were faithful, as accessories to murder may be faithful one to another.

As Ag-Tar made the sign for the charge, Kaa set himself for battle. But Chee leaped before him, the sheaf of spears clutched across her breast like a shield. Behind, one of the plesiosaurs slapped the water with its tail, the detonation snapping nerves already taut with battle pitch.

"The daughter of the lizard speaks!" cried Chee. "The man with the horns brings the good sign. Do not slay the good sign, father of me."

But Chee had overestimated her influence upon the Old Man. Ag-Tar was beyond the appeal of any woman. He was especially incensed at Chee, whose appearance in company with the horned man his small mind quickly misconstrued as a sign that Chee was a traitor. Besides, had she not defied his law and mated against his wishes? Had she not brought the tabu horned man to interrupt the sacrifice and jeopardize his reputation with the people? The Old Man's mean, conniving spirit quickly blotted out the feeble glow of compassion awakened in him by Chee, now that all his nefarious system of pretence faced disaster.

"Woo-Ga, the man with the horns," snarled the Old Man. "Death to the man with horns. Feed the man with horns to Ki-Va-Go. To Ki-Va-Go with the horned man who defies the sign of the lizard."

KAA experienced a stunning reaction as he heard Chee's startling admission, not only of former fealty to the lizard, but of her close kinship with Ag-Tar. Lightning-like, his memory touched the highlights of the controversy during the mating moon, and in a blaze of clarity he saw why Chee had pleaded for the life of Ag-Tar. It smacked of black treason to his cause and to the mating faith, yet Chee was defending him. That was reassuring, if puzzling.

Though thoroughly astounded, Kaa was far from rendered helpless by the sudden exposure of Chee's antecedents. As Ag-Tar knocked Chee aside, and she fell stunned among the spears she had been carrying, Kaa made a move that could not have been forestalled. Nor did he lack motive for that move other than fear of superior numbers. Before Ag-Tar and the sub-kings could reach him, he turned in a flash, bounded into the air, and dived into the river to the left of the plesiosaurs.

Ag-Tar and his men stopped dead, astonishment struggling for mastery with a feeling of relief that the enemy had been rid of so easily by what they thought his folly and frenzy of fear.

Hearing the plunge of the body the plesiosaur nearest the spot where Kaa had vanished beneath the surface, floundered about and dived. The other monsters began beating the water to a foam with their flippers, ducking their heads in an effort to locate their prey. Then Kaa's horned head broke the surface, and, with arms and legs working frantically, he darted swiftly away from the plesiosaur in pursuit.

The tribe now had arisen to a man and were crowding as near the shore as their fear of the plesiosaurs would allow. A miracle such as this they never before had witnessed. Here was a man swimming like a fish, after having actually retained life after prolonged submergence. All the pseudo-sorceries of the Old Man were outdone by this simple sorcery of aquatic propulsion. All of which was exactly as Kaa had desired. As for Ag-Tar and the sub-kings, they were so astounded at the reappearance and survival of the horned man that they could only stand and stare, enraged and terrified.

RECOVERED from Ag-Tar's blow, Chee regained her feet, and seeing Kaa's peril, she snatched up three spears and leaped to the bank. She could hope for no effective use of the throwing sticks, yet she had watched Kaa's casting, and she knew the rudiments of the art. At first she feared spearing Kaa instead of the reptiles, so jumbled was the mêlée, and she awaited a moment when prey and preyers would be separated.

All the plesiosaurs now had sighted Kaa and were in hot pursuit. Yet it was obvious that in quickness of turning and diving Kaa had the advantage of the clumsy beasts. But he could not keep up the furious pace for long. His motive in awing the people by his defiance of the plesiosaurs and by his swimming had now been fulfilled. Now he must find some way of escape before the plesiosaurs won in the grim game of tag by superior endurance and numbers. The near shore was barred by Ag-Tar and the sub-kings, whom he should not have feared meeting on firm footing, but who could easily overpower him before he was entirely clear of the water. The far shore was a long chance at best, with the water infested by sharks and the possibility that he would be required to elude the plesiosaurs for the entire distance. Besides, he had no desire of abandoning the battle for the kingship so well begun, and retreat to the far shore would require such abandonment, temporarily at least.

Unable to secure their prey by dashes, the baffled plesiosaurs at last came to rest. Taking advantage of the lull, Chee cast at one bulking body only a few yards from shore, in the hope of at least attracting its attention away from Kaa, who now was floating and resting, awaiting further initiative from the plesiosaurs. The spear could hardly have missed its huge mark at that distance no matter how uncertain the hand that cast it. It lodged in the back of one of the reptiles. At the sting of the point, the monster craned its neck about and splintered the haft between its jaws. The smarting salt water entering the wound, the plesiosaur began pounding the water angrily with its huge tail.

Kaa shouted a guttural to Chee, but she was unable to heed it. Ag-Tar had seen Chee throw the spear, and he was upon her, barking his death roar. Whirling, Chee saw what was in the face of the Old Man. Her own lips curled in a snarl of warning, and in her stance was the death threat of the cornered animal. Unwittingly she had endangered the cause of the good sign by well-meant compromise, but by the same processes that had attained that compromise, she could vindicate her error. Now she saw what a small portion of this brute god was hitherto known to her.

Here was the archenemy of love, weakened by age, yet still dangerously capable of outrage. All the children he had slaughtered, all the misery he had brought upon the tribe, must somehow have been photographed before Chee's eyes in the instant that Ag-Tar leaped upon her with plain intent of murder. It was Kaa or Ag-Tar, the good or the bad, love against hate, brutality opposed to the ameliorative of brutality. She had kept the faith with filial love, but that love had proved a fallacy, for truth was not in it.

She dropped one of the spears she still retained, and as Ag-Tar leaped upon her, the other spear darted forward and upward. The Old Man's impetus carried him upon his daughter, adding to the force of the spear thrust. Two hands' breadths the spear sank close to the heart. The Old Man wilted, mouth gaping in an expression of pained surprise. He made no sound as he toppled forward, driving the spear deeper with his weight, like a Roman suicide.

SO SUDDEN and unexpected had been the slaying of Ag-Tar that few were aware of it. The renewed attack of the plesiosaurs upon Kaa distracted attention from the less spectacular struggle. But Chee fully comprehended what she had done as she stared down with wild eyes at the spasmodically twitching body. Fitting indeed was this passing of the infanticide by parricide, but the fury that had fired the deed died out in the wrathful Amazon and left her only a mourning daughter. Long and sad she sounded the call of death, squatting by the head of him whose eyes were dimming as they looked their last upon the infinite so often blasphemously invoked for power.

Kaa had witnessed and was positive of what Chee had done. No longer did he doubt her. She had kept the mating faith in unparalleled exoneration. Triumph was his. Mad joy flooded him. A vast appetite for battle lent him the strength of a Titan.

"Ay-ya! Ay-ya!" he bellowed his defiance and exultation, even as O-Wa had sounded that cry long ago when the great herd had baffled Ag-Tar. Then, like a tor-

toise, he dived as two of the plesiosaurs lunged at him. He shot down between the monsters, less than an arm's length from each of them, and he broke the water close to the bank before the floundering beasts discovered the escape of their prey. The sub-kings were taken wholly by surprise. Before they could move a leg to prevent it, Kaa had pulled himself to the bank.

Kaa just had time to steady himself when the sub-kings rushed him. The horned man stepped to one side, caught Za-Kut under the arms, and, using the sub-king's own impetus to help the throw, pitched him headforemost into the river. Za-Kut's shriek of mortal terror sounded almost simultaneously with the hollow slap of bare skin against the great neck of the foremost plesiosaur.

Pu-Mok was too near Kaa to escape the palpable danger he now saw imminent in Za-Kut's sudden fate. Kaa seized Pu-Mok as if he had been a clumsy, overgrown child. Not for naught had been O-Wa's wrestling with Kaa in his babyhood. Pu-Mok was thrown exactly as Za-Kut, striking the water only a few feet from a plesiosaur. By that time Za-Kut had been dismembered by two of the monsters, and the third speedily silenced the screaming of Pu-Mok.

Pandemonium now broke out in the clearing as the tribe scattered back from the river, screeching and wailing. The flippers of the gorging plesiosaurs beat the water to a semblance of a storm as they battled over the spoils. Halfway across the clearing the tribe retreated, there gathering in little knots, prepared to run for the barrows at the first sign of the plesiosaurs coming ashore, or of the onslaught of the horned man, who tossed strong men higher than his head as if they had been children.

The moment he had vanquished Za-Kut and Pu-Mok, Kaa leaped to the spears lying where Chee had dropped them. Seizing half a dozen in one hand, he turned back to the river bank. Swiftly he levelled one of the keen lances, leaning far back, thews rigid. Then the throwing arm shot down with all the body behind it. So swift was the flight of the spear that it was invisible to the onlookers.

The plesiosaur selected as the first mark received the spear in its breast just below the bulge of the neck. At such short range Kaa could hit with great penetration. The spear head must have reached the lungs, for the reptile paused in its feeding and coughed hoarsely, lowering its head. A second spear followed the first, burying itself a fourth of its length alongside the other. The plesiosaur began to beat the water in death throes as its blood mingled with that of the sub-kings.

Furiously, Kaa volleyed at the remaining two plesiosaurs, throwing with either arm, replenishing his supply of weapons from the scattered bundle behind him. He spitted one plesiosaur squarely between its open jaws, the spear point penetrating the brain through the roof of the mouth. The third monster was impaled through the neck, just under the lower jaw. In ten spear casts Kaa slew all three of the plesiosaurs, though the threshing of flippers and tails would continue for hours as the tenacious reptile fibres flexed and reflexed even after the heart had ceased to function.

Chee had dragged the body of Ag-Tar away from the river bank in fear that the plesiosaurs might come ashore and devour it. All through the slaughter of the monsters she had cowered by the side of her dead, hardly able to rejoice at the victory of her mate for the grief that was hers. With no reaction whatever she watched Kaa turn and run toward the frightened tribe, crying:

"Ki-Va-Go is dead! Ag-Tar is dead! The sign of Dong-Ga slays the bad sign! Kaa comes to rule the people!"

But the tribe was not to be placated so easily. Before the demoniac perpetrator of the carnage in the river they turned and fled in a body to the barrows. The horned man was evidence of the awful unknown by contrast with which the manifestations of Ag-Tar were but child's play. In the horned man they saw the fury of a god of the water and of the mysterious flying death missiles, a god whose strength was like the strength of the sabre-tooth. Gone was the fetish of the lizard. For had it not failed in this hour of supreme trial? Was not Ki-Va-Go dead by the hand of the new sign? Was not Ag-Tar in the long sleep, lying out there on the clearing with the haft of a spear protruding from his breast?

SEEING how the people were afraid, scattering like sheep before the wolf, Kaa stopped at the central fire and turned to Chee. He strode up to her, something like awe or reverence softening the steely glitter of triumph in his eyes.

"You told me not you were the daughter of Ag-Tar," he signed. "You tell me not to

slay the Old Man. You slay the Old Man, father of you. I do not understand."

Chee lifted eyes almost unseeing, like the eyes of the pain-racked dumb beast that can not tell its woes. "The mate of me is Old Man of the people," she signed. "Call the people to the central fire. Make the good sign of Dong-Ga for the people. Tell the people of the good sign and the new laws. The mate of you will stay by the father of her, who was the bad sign."

All the barrow mouths were thronged with peeping faces when Kaa turned once more toward the ridge. Upon his advance the faces vanished into the dark holes, and the ridge was as if deserted. Kaa went on. Noticing a heap of flint fragments where a stone artisan had had his workshop, he stopped and selected a slender piece, sharp at one end. With this in hand he surveyed the barrow-ridge as the most elevated and most easily observable position.

A large slab of red sandstone lay half-buried in the ridge, flat side out, where it had slid down in a talus slip. Hastening to the foot of the ridge, Kaa climbed to the sandstone slab and began to scratch upon the stone as if inspired. That which swiftly came into outline under the gouging of the sharp flint was the head of a bison as large as the slab would allow. Three times life size it was, jagged and repeated of line, yet clearly identifiable and visible from any position in the clearing owing to the wide, white lines made by the pulverizing action of the flint on the softer sandstone.

Running back to the central fire, Kaa surveyed his handiwork with satisfaction. The heads once more had appeared at the barrow mouths. The tribe was somewhat reassured now that the horned man had revealed no desire to vent his wrath upon them as the new Old Man.

All eyes were bent upon Kaa as with one sweep of his hand he tore the scalp of the bison from his head and stood forth unadorned, heavy, black locks falling about a head singularly beautiful in its alert poise of triumph and conscious power.

Kaa stood there a moment, allowing the tribe plenty of time to observe that the horns were not a permanent part of him, that he was physically as they, then he called out:

"Come, my people, to the central fire. I shall tell of Dong-Ga, the good sign, and the new life that has come to the tribe. No more shall the weak children die. No more shall Ki-Va-Go eat the children. The toothless shall live. The mates shall choose each other. Kaa, the Unnamed, Old Man of the people, speaks. It is the word of the law."

So they came at last, like abused children called to receive unexpected gifts, half expecting the gifts shall be withheld in the end. But they were eager for the kind covenant of the new god-idea, as promised by the maker of miracles. When they were all gathered about the central fire, Kaa pointed out the rebus on the slab of sandstone, and he knelt and made the sign of fealty. Like handwriting on the wall, the likeness of the bison was another miracle in the swift succession of miracles performed, and the people willingly gave allegiance to the horned man's god.

In such a manner the sham of the bad sign crumbled before the thundering truth of the good sign. And as O-Wa had dimly dreamed, the tabu man-child became Old Man of his people, though the duel of the gods had not been foreshadowed as the way of conquest.

Only Chee was removed from the triumph of the hour. First in faith to the good sign, and first to defy instinct in promulgation of the good sign, she yet had no philosophy with which to alleviate instinctive remorse for the slaying of the priest of the lizard. Now that Ag-Tar's evil reign was ended, and only the mute clay remained to commemorate the unspeakable horrors its hands had accomplished, Chee remembered the gruff growl uttered as she performed the offices of affection.

Whatever Ag-Tar had been in life, in death he was all that he had not been. Sin and capacity to sin vanished with the life force that had animated sin, and now the remnant of goodness and wisdom the Old Man had expressed in love was all that lived after him. And so, but one among the people mourned for the feared and hated Ag-Tar, and that one his assassin. From the depths of such exonerated parricide was to rise the temple of emancipated woman, built upon the divine inconsistencies of the female kind, that is more deadly than the male.

CHAPTER X

THE BAD SIGN

FROM the mouth of the great barrow Kaa, the Old Man, gazed abstractedly over the environs of his hard-won domain. Peace was everywhere manifest-

ed. The sky smiled down upon the smiling land, and there was subtle laughter in the sunbeams that danced in golden effulgence upon the rippling surface of the broad river. Behind him, the lord of the troglodytes could hear the comforting stirrings of his mate, as she labored at enlarging the inner chamber, sounding a babbling chant the while.

Nothing was wanting for life-long happiness, yet Kaa was insidiously troubled by puzzling associations which persistently recurred at the most unexpected moments. It was not his nature ever to be completely satisfied. Already he had accomplished far more than any male of his time. But the very gifts which ordained his superior intelligence ordained that perfect peace, the phlegmatic torpor of his kind, could not be his. Always there was a bigger world to conquer; always must a new problem taunt him. And there was nothing unusual in the fact that he alone should nearly approach the truth concerning the seismic phenomena of the valley.

If he had had only himself and Chee to care for he would not have worried, but now he was responsible for the entire tribe.

Even the stallion king of the wild horses exercises intelligence superior to the intelligence of his herd, and he will risk his freedom, or his life, when pursued, by running in the rear, nipping the rumps of the slow mares and colts. Kaa, being man and ever more thinking than the horse, made even more cunning provisions for his herd than the stallion. Moreover, he had proved himself strongest to cope with the enemies of life prolongation, and the wisest to foresee and forestall calamity. Therefore, in his superior wisdom he was able vaguely to comprehend portent of calamity in the terrestrial disturbances of the valley.

He did not require any knowledge of vulcanology or geochemistry in order to foresee dire possibilities in the signs of the times.

However, he was in nowise certain what to do about it, and in nowise positive of the nature of whatever doom might be pending. Frequently he was strongly moved to migrate from the valley. But where? The barren desert surrounding the valley could not support the tribe. Such a step would be foolishly courting extermination by starvation in a foodless land. The hunters would deem him mad and desert him if he were to order them to leave the peaceful, fruitful valley because of a mere premonition of an evil that none could understand.

Eight rainy seasons had passed since the earth had shaken, and the smoking east rim, with its range of craters and flowing, black stone, was eighty miles away.

Still farther away was the western rim and the higher craters. Again and again Kaa reasoned himself out of any idea of leaving the comfortable valley, but always the demon of unrest returned, and, perforce, he must go through his processes of reassurance all over again.

SUCH was the new Old Man's dilemma this sunny day six moons after he had won the kingship in the battle with the bad sign.

Subconsciously he became aware that the sound of Chee's digging in the barrow had ceased and that a body was brushing along the passage to the outer air. Chee came out and squatted by Kaa's side. Though conscious of her presence, he did not turn to her, nor discontinue his contemplation of the mind-pictures.

For some time Chee remained silent, alternately studying Kaa's profile and the eastern sky, as she vainly sought that upon which his eyes were fixed. Yet always she must be disappointed in her efforts to follow him beyond the scope of physical vision. Her dreams were inspired by the elements in herself; his were frequently inspired by elements only vaguely associated with himself.

"What does the mate of me see behind the eyes?" she at last interrogated anxiously.

He did not answer immediately, and when he did his words were slow and studied, the gutturals somehow softer than ordinary.

"The black stone that hides the mother of me I see behind the eyes," was his answer. "Woo-ga, the black stone if it comes across the plains."

"Many walks away is the black stone," she reassured. "The black stone can not come many walks. See the people shining like the sun is in them. See how the sign of Dong-Ga and the new laws make the hunters beat their hands with the good feeling."

"All is good sign," he was forced to admit. "The hunters bring much meat. The women make the sweet sound in the mouth. It is the whispers in the air that have no mouths which are bad sign. They

tell me woo-ga, the black, burning stone, woo-ga, the deep water, woo-ga, the big smoke in the sky where the sun rises."

"Dong-Ga, the good sign saved the mother of you," Chee responded confidently. "The good sign will save the people from the falling stones and the big smoke."

But he was not so sanguine. "In the dark moon was the good sign angry. In the dark moon the mother of me was not saved by the good sign. When the good sign is angry we will not know," he prophesied gloomily.

Brief as had been the tenure of Kaa's reign the favorable changes wrought by the creed of the good sign were everywhere visible. The stone artisans, gathered about their work-shop of flint fragments, were manufacturing spears of Kaa's invention, a step toward the bow and arrow. Not far from the stone workers a group of young males were casting spears at a tree trunk, avidly mastering the improved weapon by tireless practise that would stop at nothing short of perfection.

He knew the tribe marvelled at his accomplishments because they could not duplicate them nor equal them, yet he did not marvel at his gifts. What he did was far inferior to the inexpressible wonders he dreamed of achieving and was unable to achieve.

He was an irregularity of impatient Nature, created to hasten dilatory advancement, and destined to leave no progeny of his particular kind. All the ages would have their Kaas by which society and industry would be revolutionized, but all the wise men of any age could never explain these Kaas, nor reproduce them by alchemy or artificial selection. Such is the law of exceptions to the rule of heredity and selection, by which divinity, or the unknown, is unquestionably manifested.

Now, Kaa moved on to the edge of the clearing and entered the jungle. He took a diagonal course toward the river, and presently he could hear loud shouting and violent splashing of water. The sounds grew louder as he advanced, and at length he came upon a scene of great activity.

A small lagoon of still, deep water lay under a heavy overhang of ferns, which had been cut away on the near bank. In the cleared space several male children were gathered as they watched excitedly the struggle of another in the water not far from the bank.

Here was another result of the new dynasty. Having learned by his own adventures the great value of aquatic propulsion, Kaa had made compulsory the learning of self-support in deep water. However, he had been required to exempt the older hunters from the law, for they proved unable to overcome an ingrown fear of deep water, and were relatively helpless in it and unable to react intelligently to instruction. But the young, whose thews and brains were unformed, proved apt, if at first unwilling, students. Some soon attained considerable proficiency after Kaa had initiated them in his own way. Those mastering the accomplishment were eager to teach others, which form of pedagogy was in progress at the lagoon.

DESPITE the imaginings of Kaa, the reign of the good sign continued auspicious as moon after moon slipped by on the downy wings of the dove of peace and the *takuluk* of full stomachs. The rainy season came and went. Spring draped a garish garment over all the valley. Midsummer of the second year of Kaa's kingship found the tribe flourishing as never before. Happy were the hunters and the mothers; happy the mates who wedded at will and by choice and dwelt in barrows undarkened by the cloud of the law of flesh. Chee's firstborn, a man-child, came squalling into the world, and Kaa, too, was supremely contented save for the inevitable moments of foreboding engendered by rumination upon the probability of the doom which was foretold in the smoke of the east rim.

It was late in the summer when Kaa began deliberating a new site for the barrows. Game were growing scarce and wary in the old hunting grounds, and the hunters were required to venture farther and farther afield. But before the new location was decided upon the migration materialized, and of such momentousness was that materialization that the mere motive of fresh hunting grounds was completely obliterated.

No preliminary oppression forecast the calamity. Neither was the smoke sign over the east rim of increased density the day before. Contrarily, the smoke was almost indiscernible many hours previous to the opening manifestations. It came in the night while the tribe slumbered in their snug barrows, safe from night prowlers behind the boulders blocking the entrances to the sleeping chambers. None saw the red glow that suddenly lighted up the

eastern sky; none witnessed the vast, murky cloud that billowed up after the burst of illumination, blotting out the stars halfway to the zenith.

Minutes after the appearance of the vivid glare, the valley seemed hanging in helpless expectancy, while the smoke rolled blacker and higher against the background of starry azure. Deep in the jungle a sabre-tooth roared. Answering roars broke out from far and near. In the cries of the big cats was a different note than the usual ferocious defiance. It was a note of fear, of blind, instinctive terror. Then the subterranean Titan struck the first blow with the hammer of Vulcan and the arm of Poseidon.

A muffled detonation, distending air and earth alike, sounded in the direction of the east rim. Under the bank of smoke the fiery flush blazed up in flickering fans and streamers, miles wide, like the banners of an aurora borealis. Increasing to a deafening, grinding thunder, the detonation scattered and branched from the centre of concussion, running along far underground in every direction, increasing and diminishing in volume, dying away in one distant quarter, only to reawaken with a shuddering crash in another. Growing in intensity and violence, a rapid vibration accompanied the explosions, until the whole valley was lurching, swaying and pitching, like a stormy sea.

In the great barrow Kaa was flung against the wall from his couch of dried skins, awakening slightly stunned, Chee's scream piercing his ears. He did not need to look or listen to know what was happening. All his forebodings had cleared the way for swift, clear comprehension. As searing terror surged up in him, raising the hair upon his head, his voice rasped a twice repeated utterance that was inaudible even to him because of the fearful uproar:

"Woo-ga, kok-ba! Woo-ga, kok-ba!"

As he dragged back the boulder blocking the outer passage and pulled Chee after him into the dark tunnel, the violence of the first shock was perceived to recede somewhat, being replaced by a gentle, rocking motion. Stones and loose earth streamed down from the roof and walls of the passage as Kaa and Chee crawled on, while, outside, the crash of falling boulders and sliding earth joined the stunning concussions of the subterrestrial explosions.

In fleeting periods of comparative quiet, the screams of awakened women and children and the roaring of terrified males could be heard as the tribe tumbled from the disintegrating barrows, some swept away by the avalanches, others buried alive before they could escape into the open. The terrific pressure beneath the valley seemed flowing and bubbling this way and that, cracking, shuddering, ripping the imprisoning soil-cap, flinging tons and tons of earth and stone hither and thither with each contortion of its behemoth struggles for freedom.

Kaa was forced to dig his way through a heap of earth that had slid down before the barrow mouth. Growling and snarling, he scratched with frantic haste, and when he broke through to the outer air, now surcharged with a faint tinge of brimstone and sulphur, he went headfirst down the ridge, rolling the last part of the way to the clearing, Chee close behind, her child clutched tightly in her arms. Though frenzied himself, Kaa retained sufficient presence of mind to bellow above the bedlam of the elements an order to his tribe:

"To the trees! To the trees! Away from the falling rocks!"

REELING across the rocking clearing, Kaa and Chee set an example for the rest of the tribe. Plunging into the dense undergrowth fringing the north side of the open space, they crouched, protected from the bounding boulders and clear of the landslides. A scene of awful chaos awaited them when they looked back at the clearing.

A half moon dimly lighted the environs. Landslides large and small were plunging down the barrow-ridge, whose crest was tossing and groaning as if in mortal agony. Thundering masses of uptorn débris struck the foot of the ridge with shocking impact, clouds of dust puffing up and handfuls of fine gravel flying through the air with stinging swiftness. Above the loom of the jungle's lower terraces, the tall palms, silhouetted against the sky, swayed and cracked and wailed as if struck by a tornado.

Groups of the terror-stricken tribe hovered here and there. Others were running in circles, screaming at the top of their voices, wholly bereft of reason. Only a few had had the sense to seek the protection of the jungle as Kaa had commanded and exemplified. In the fresh débris lodged on the face of the ridge, or slowly sliding down, others still alive were writhing in frantic efforts to extricate them-

selves before the downpouring stream of stones and earth finally buried them entirely.

Again receding to a low rate of vibration, the quake increased suddenly to violent undulation. A grinding roar set up miles away, sped toward the barrow-ridge growing rapidly louder, crossed the clearing with a noise as of a great locomotive, and passed on westward into the night. Behind that hellish thunder a yawning fissure had opened, winding diagonally across the clearing, cleaving the barrow-ridge at the north end. Far away, on all sides, were audible similar thunders as the earth's crust split into jagged sections above the terrific impact of the underground forces.

Waves twice as high as a man were rushing in from the river, dashing halfway to the ridge before they washed back with a sucking hiss. With a roar as of a hundred waterfalls, the newly-formed fissure filled with river water. Then, as if partly closing far below, the fissure regurgitated the flood in a tremendous fountain that drenched the clearing like a cloudburst, or a water spout. Many of the tribe were washed, screaming and struggling, into the river by the deluge, and a wail of grief and horror broke from the lips of Kaa, Chee and the few who had been wise enough to join them.

Lifting his voice to a scream that was heard even above the deafening cacophony of the elements, Kaa sounded the call of assembly. Those on the north side of the fissure responded quickly enough, but the ones on the south were slower because of greater obstacles. Some succeeded in leaping the fissure, but others fell into it and were washed into the river or drowned by the waves inundating them.

As the clearing was deserted by the last of the tribe still alive, a herd of stampeding peccaries dashed past the growing gathering at the jungle fringe, squealing madly as they scuttled into the open. Almost to an animal they were swept into the river by a backwashing wave, and the last of them vanished in the sloshing water that brimmed the fissure.

Numerous fish and small amphibians squirmed, crawled and wriggled across the clearing where they had been stranded by the highest waves. Two moose-deer broke out of the jungle wall on the south, baaing madly. A huge section of the barrow-ridge cracked loose from the bed-rock and pitched over. Beneath it the moose-deer vanished.

KAA now was crying ceaselessly, as also was Chee. It was a childlike, plaintive cry, wholly subconscious in intonation. The fugitives accompanying them took up the cry as the barrow-ridge crumpled, destroying the imprisoned people. Whatever hope remained that the quake would subside and allow excavation of those interred was speedily banished by new and more sinister developments.

Deep underground a low hissing commenced that rose with terrific speed, gaining in volume of sound until it pained the eardrums, like the wide open vent of a steam boiler under high pressure. Out of the fissure this vast sound burst, shooting a tower of water with it, which fell back to the clearing in an enormous cascade. A wall of steam blew through the falling water, and the whole clearing was blotted out by scalding vapor, roaring, blasting, whipping, in streams, festoons and funnels of ghastly, sizzling white.

Before the miniature tidal wave, caused by the uprushing of vapor, the tribe fled. Like frightened cattle they crowded together, aiming for the ridge as they splashed and tore their way through the partly inundated underbrush. Many were trampled underfoot in the struggle up the ridge, and the remainder of the disorderly horde poured over the summit, naked skins shining in the flickering, red light of the eastern inferno as if greased with fat.

Kaa hoped only to keep the tribe from scattering, and those feeble efforts he exerted to this end were scarcely required. Instinct kept them together, save for an occasional individual. Instinct also led them westward away from the flaring nucleus of destruction.

The shocks now were detonating as if timed by a mighty hand superintending the catastrophe. Peal upon peal of thunder was bandied back and forth from rim to rim of the valley. Intervals of almost dead calm were followed by sudden, griping shudders, violent lurchings and disintegrating spasms of the land. Great tracts of jungle were tossed and distorted as faults formed and reformed.

Acres and acres were enveloped by the vast quantities of steam and acrid gases rushing out of the fissures as the surface water rushed down and was vaporized by the intense heat of the subterrestrial lava. The air became choked with sulphurous fumes and infinitestimal particles of volcanic mud, which streaked the stream with reddish brown where they were thickest. Scalding geysers shot hundreds of feet

into the sky, while sticks, stones, leaves and sand flew about like chaff in a wind storm.

Again and again the fleeing tribe was foiled in its flight by gaping fissures and impassable barriers of rushing steam. They were past the stage of terror—struck dumb by greater horror than ever they had dreamed in grimmest nightmare. Like the wild beasts roaring, squealing, crying on every hand, they fled whichever way was least fraught with peril. Man and mastodon were enemies no longer in this terror of destruction. Shoulder to shoulder ran panting moose-deer and stumbling hunter, dark eyes glaring with mutual madness.

TOILING westward from the ruin of the tribal barrows, the terrified tribe retreated across the unstable soil-cap now shattered and contorted by the upheaving magma. Kaa alone had grazed the truth of the physical nature of the disaster in his premonitions concerning local volcanic signs. But not he alone suffered the devastating dénouement of that truth. Nearly a hundred of his people had lost their lives at the barrow-ridge, drowned in the flooding river waves, buried by landslides, caught in collapsing barrows, crushed by hurtling boulders, or engulfed by the bottomless abyss that had sundered the clearing. And the bare two hundred, surviving the first few minutes of the quake, constantly dwindled in number, succumbing to previous injuries, dropping out from the after-effects of scalding steam, falling into the fissures opening on every hand.

Ghostly towers of vapor, hissing, bellying, ballooning from the riven earth, almost obliterated the wan moonlight. Only the reflection of the incandescent furnace in the east provided a flickering illumination, blinding, confusing. Sometimes by sound alone the tribe located and detoured hot fountains gushing up through tangled undergrowth. They broke through lesser barriers of steam with tight-shut eyes, leaping jagged fissures, dodging bounding moose-deer and hurtling sabre-tooth.

There was no thought of seeking near by refuge. Even the frenzy of blind fear could not wrest from their minds the appalling conviction that the valley was incontrovertibly tabu. Each sign, each prompting of instinct fanned to hotter flame one all-engulfing passion—to fly with the last ounce of musterable strength.

Heading the clawing, screeching horde, Kaa forged along among the strongest hunters. Without forethought the males took the lead and the outer flanks, the women and children crowding between and behind mate, brother and father. The leaders tore through twining walls of foliage, making way for the mass of the tribe, while Kaa guided them to open vales and less dense thickets whenever possible.

Not far behind the sappers ran Chee, panting, wild-eyed, her child clutched in cramped arms scarcely conscious of their burden. Kaa she located and followed by the sound of his voice rather than by sight. Again and again Kaa bellowed warnings of dangerous fissures ahead or of invincible cloud-battalions boiling upon them. In all that bedlam the Old Man's voice alone partook of calm and courage, and like children the tribe obeyed the mandates of him who first leaped the fissures and first tried the temper of the sweltering vapor bank.

Minutes of the chaotic flight ensued before the underground concussions grew gradually less terrific and the intervals longer between violent upheavals. Yet the cachinnatory bluster of escaping vapor alone rendered the night hideous. Nor was there any sign of diminution in such emissions. Rather, the raucous rumble doubled and trebled as torrents of surface water thundered down abyssal fissures, regurgitating prodigiously upon contact with the seething white-hot welter of fused minerals.

A MILE west of the river a new peril stole upon them. Kaa first observed the appalling indications. At first he thought it but the effect of the flaring and dying red light upon the vaporous masses, for only fragmentary glimpses could he catch through the dense undergrowth. But, running nearer, he perceived a moving trident of glowing streams, advancing swiftly upon them. In the instant he saw the streams he smelled the rank odor of stewing flora sap, embittered by the acrid tang of sulphur, instantly identified by memory of the crater cone on the east rim. The crackle of flames became audible. A low, vast, frictional sound filled the jungle, as of a massive body being dragged slowly through the brush. Then a huge, flaming serpent, with mottles of yellow phosphorus winking and sputtering upon its skin, coiled around a bulwark of giant pinites, headed straight for the tribe.

Kaa roared the order to turn back. The foremost wheeled; the others piled upon

them. A horde of wild beasts, fleeing before the seething flood, collided with the multitudes from the river. Snarling, spitting chaos ensued. Scores were trampled, while yells and roars of pain and fright challenged the thunder of the earth. When the streams of fugitives at last united in the new direction of flight, a heap of dead and dying remained behind, over which, with a hiss and frying stench, the foremost lava flood crawled on.

Brush fires burst out behind the tribe in a hundred places from the red-hot river of molten rock. Serpentine funnels of green wood smoke mingled with the choking fumes of hydrocarbonic gases. Rabid tongues of green flame, haloed with brilliant blue, licked and flickered sinisterly through the tree-tops, as gases liberated from the fiery fingers ignited on contact with surface oxygen.

Somewhere west of the river a reservoir of lava had found outlet in an old fault or vapor-vent, from which a minor eruption was rapidly overflowing the vicinity. Frequently, large sections of the jungle floor were baking hot underfoot. At times the panic-stricken tribe stumbled into oozy scums of a dark, viscous substance that blistered the soles of the feet. The enormous quantities of steam alone counteracted the threatening tree fires as the lava spent its force. Conflagration after conflagration died in embryo by sizzling conflicts between heat and moisture.

Swept along in the mêlée of wild beasts, the tribe bore somewhat north along the brink of a fissure recently passed over, but now unspanably widened by repeated earth shocks. They encountered no further phantasmagorias of colored flames and withering heat; the gurgitation of lava seemed confined to the area from which they fled. After the first long spurt of running there was no danger of being overtaken by the molten flood since the lava lost momentum the farther it pushed from the centre of eruption, or was wholly engulfed by the insatiable maws of intervening chasms.

From the fissure which the tribe was paralleling a wall of steam burst suddenly with a sound like a roar of a tremendous cataract. To a height inestimable by the eye the geyser shot up and spouted, spewing a stinging mist that burned like embers of steel. Man and beast veered away, scrambling over one another in the race to escape the blistering billows. Liquefied pumice and muddy water followed the blasts of steam, gallons and gallons of the scalding froth splattering over the fugitives.

BADLY burned by a drenching from the evulsion, Kaa outdistanced the tribe, spurred on by biting pain. But he recovered his senses before the tribe was lost to him, and he slowed down till they came up. He could easily have outstripped them in the race with death, but he had no intention of doing so. Of danger to his own life he was almost unconscious in his efforts to save the tribe. Then, too, Chee and the man-child were somewhere in that mass of struggling human beings. Stronger than fear of death and the animal instinct of self-preservation was the herd instinct of the herd leader by which Kaa expressed faith and responsibility. It was he who shivered the hearts of the few who tried to break away and hide in some likely looking nook, like ostriches with heads in sand, and he who urged them on with his strident cries of "Uncha! Uncha!"

Billow after billow of choking vapors and wood smoke weltered down upon the tribe as the lava consumed the undergrowth in its path. Almost directly east they swerved when the barrier of escaping steam on their right died out with the tapering and vanishing of the fissure that issued it. Yet the tendency was to bear north because of the turmoil known to exist in the river bed. Various obstructions also contrived to hold the tribe to a course as much north as east.

All sense of the passage of time was lost as through the balance of the terrible night the mad flight continued. Minutes were as hours when faced with immediate peril; hours were as minutes when comparatively free from local danger. Accidents occurred unnoticed by any one. Children were trampled, or knocked down by megatheres and sabre-tooths. Some fell into fissures that proved too wide to leap, while the older females began to drop behind from exhaustion. Bludgeoned by friend and foe, bruised and battered by the crumbling of their world, the tribe tore madly on, their screams of mortal terror like the piping of linnets in a den of embattled lions.

None knew just when dawn came. The rising sun was wholly obscured by the glowering clouds of volcanic dust and russet vapor banked like monster thunder-heads in the southeast. It must have been almost midday before the sunlight was observed through occasional rents in

the swirling, suffocating fog. But even the sight of the sun could not greatly cheer the forlorn remnant of the tribe. For day had brought small surcease in the processes of disintegration and the weaker ones long since had resigned themselves to death, feeling each flex of aching, burning thews would be their last. Even the strongest wilted under the sapping strain of that tempestuous retreat. Less and less alert were the dogged troglodytes in avoidance of danger as senses were numbed and calloused by blighting fatigue and unalleviated despair.

The jungle had at length burst into flame from the intense heat of the flooding lava. In spite of the extinguishing blasts of condensed moisture, the fire gained headway with implacable rapidity. Fern, palm and catkin brake, charred and crisped to methanic inflammability by the terrific heat of the molten inundation, ignited instantaneously. A blustering wind coughed out of the west with the fury of a mad Boreas. In yawing gusts and withering flurries the jungle fire drove all before it. Glowing twigs, charred leaves and flaming fern fronds filled the air, soaring, eddying, dipping as they floated down wind. Yellowish cataracts of turgid reek, shot with bloody clots from the flaring radiance of the inferno, poured upward as the fire spread, driving the weary fugitives to greater efforts, choking off what little fresh air remained after the surcharge of volcanic gases.

More and more inevitable became the crossing of the river, winding somewhere east, as the blazing surf plunged nearer and nearer, shooting off to north and south in raging forays before which the jungle melted like a mass of spider webs. Less than an hour after the lava had been sighted the whole of the area out of which the tribe had fled was a fuliginous tarn of billowing smoke, studded by swaying spires of blazing pinites, stabbed with the weaving stems of flaming palms, whose reeking plumes burst in dazzling showers or dripped like monstrous, bleeding poppies.

MUCH as he was confused by changes in topography and by the uncertainty of the alternately glaring and dying illumination, Kaa knew instinctively when they neared the river somewhere north of the ruined tribal barrows. And he was encouraged in the knowledge that they were not far from a certain stretch of shallows across which even the youngest children could safely wade. In the frenzy of the hour he did not consider that the river must have been vastly changed by the terrific bombardment that had crumbled the rest of the valley.

They came unexpectedly upon the river after all Kaa's speculations upon its position. But it was not the river they were accustomed to seeing. Not a second too soon a gust of wind whipped away the smoke and Kaa bellowed the order to halt as he tottered on the brink of an inverted segment of strata, once a portion of the river ridge. The tribe crowded to the bank, struck dumb with amazement.

Covered with intertwining cracks and seams, dotted by tenuous spouts of steam and clots of boiling mud, a huge mound rose ahead, its rotund summit almost as high as the barren promontory upon which the tribe had gathered. After the first brief scrutiny, Kaa, as well as the others, comprehended that here the river once had flowed. But now only a few small pools were to be seen in the channel. Looking further, Kaa observed in the southeast, almost obscured by ragged fleeces of vapor, a deep draw which he never had seen before. A large body of water half filled the draw, its roily surface boiling and gurgling, broken by spraying fountains, some towering many feet, showering a ceaseless deluge upon the murky, inland sea. Here a portion of the river must have emptied after the original bed was upheaved.

Looking back at the mound, Kaa could not doubt that this inconceivable displacement of the river had occurred. Plainly visible along the foot of the mound was a pebbly strip of beach, and, farther up, the smooth washed, sandy bed, furrowed and duned by deep-water currents. Thousands of fish littered the mound, or were lodged in silvery heaps in various indentures. These had been stranded upon the diverting of the river, and most of them were dead—scalded by steam or suffocated by long exposure to the air. Crawfish, mollusks, crustaceans by the score crawled aimlessly about, and the few shallow pools left in the deeper hollows teemed with amphibians dead and alive. It was too far north for sea monsters to have been caught in the cataclysm; only a few sharks and dog-fish were numbered among the hapless victims of the convulsion.

"Woo-ga, woo-ga," boomed one of the hunters, as he stared in stark amazement upon the remains of the broad river. "Ag-

Tar, the Old Man, shakes the earth. Ag-Tar, the Old Man, makes the water leap away. Ag-Tar comes from the long sleep to slay the people with the falling rocks."

The idea was contagious. A number of older males and females, once idolaters of the lizard who had witnessed the beginning of the bad sign, echoed the dirge of the superstitious hunter, and soon the name of Ag-Tar was upon a hundred tongues. But Kaa and Chee strongly doubted that the old mountebank had had aught to do with the destruction of the valley. At first Kaa was alert for signs of rebellion among the males. Native cunning bade him beware of suffering for his new kingship now that the tribe had conceived the idea of Ag-Tar's post-humous vengeance. But as no sign of such hostility was evinced, he wisely remained silent. Such superstition could not affect the present or future safety of the tribe. But the suggestion of tangible cause for the catastrophe suggested tangible counteractions of the cause, thence suggesting Dong-Ga, the good sign. Forthwith, as he stood there above the contorted river channel, Kaa lifted a thorn-scratched, blistered face to the lowering sky and muttered:

"Dong-Ga, save the people. Dong-Ga, Dong-Ga, save the people."

It was a prayer, though he could know nothing of prayers. In dire danger, with which he could not cope, he had but one regress — the unfathomable unknown, whose favorable powers he symbolized in the sign of the bison, god-idea of O-Wa.

Scarcely had his lips framed the last syllable of the invocation when he turned abruptly to his left, signed for the tribe to follow, and slid down a steep incline to the bottom of a ravine where it joined the former river channel. As the tribe poured, slithering and lunging, after their leader, they could see the throngs of jungle denizens crossing the drained channel north of them, where there was no steep declivity. Kaa had no desire to mingle with the beast hordes if he could avoid it, even anticipating no intentional hostilities from the frightened animals.

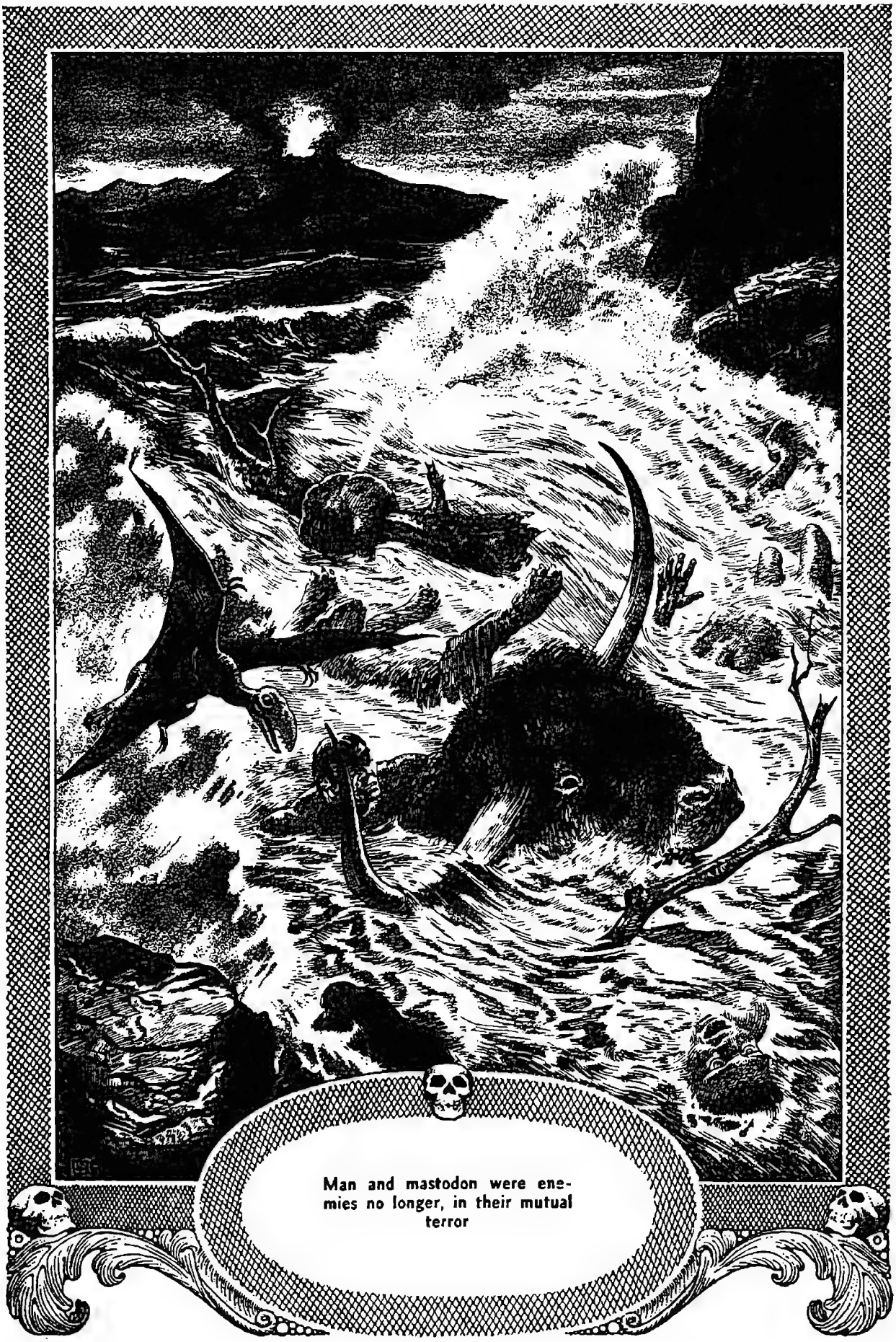
WHEN the tribe all had crowded into the mouth of the ravine Kaa led them out into the open and up the slope of the mound. Some bent and drank unwisely at the bitter, briny pools that were not steaming, others snatched up dead fish, devouring them as they went. But the majority were unconscious of hunger or thirst in their great anxiety to escape the ruined territory. They whined and gabbled with terror as they set foot on the strange, forbidding soil of the former river bed.

Beyond the mound a dreary outlook confronted the tribe. A large, subsided area, dotted by muddy pools and rumpled by winrows of uptorn trees, stretched away under the rolling clouds of smoke and vapor. Pools boiling hot, a few tepid, none naturally cool, lay in every low place. Gnarled roots and dripping, mud-clogged brush hid some of the hot pools, and, occasionally, as the tribe proceeded, one of them cried out with pain as he broke through into scalding water. Broad swathes of vegetation had been washed flat by the flooding river water. Not infrequently the low places were fouled by black, rubbery shoals, streaked with slate-grey pumice.

The vast numbers of jungle beasts, having crossed the upheaved river channel, scattered out over the ruined expanse, kind calling to kind as comparative open country allowed them to separate into more or less distinct groups. Cumbersome tapirs, with folded, hairless hides, slouched clumsily along. Herds of moose-deer slid and floundered on their wide, splay hoofs. Sneaking, wire-haired peccaries plunged and struggled through morasses of gamboge mud and coffee-colored spume.

Sabre-tooth tigers, tongues lolling from dripping jaws, tawny skins smeared with mud, or blackened by smoke and tar, leaped and glided in their peculiar, spineless gaits. By them slunk packs of giant wolves, large as donkeys, ears laid back, gaunt flanks fringed with tiny mud-balls and clinging burs. Towering above the motley procession lurched the bear-like megatheres with rocking, deep-sea sailor stride, and, less numerous, the long-tusked mastodons reared, wallowed and sloshed across the steeping sloughs. Flocks of long-tailed lemurs hopped and scurried everywhere, shrieking shrilly when burned in hot pools, loudly acclaiming their distinct disadvantage where few upright trees remained through which to swing by aid of their prehensile tails.

Many of the dangerous tar-pools the tribe was warned to avoid by animals mired in them. Especially were the mastodons and tapirs hard put to get through because of unwieldy weight and lesser agility. Many lay dead, half submerged, in the slowly cooling tar-pools, doubtless having struggled there for hours.



Man and mastodon were enemies no longer, in their mutual terror

Gaps in smoke and fog, formed by the whipping wind, afforded glimpses of somewhat higher ground, and the tribe was more or less encouraged in the unequal struggle across the subsided area. Furthermore, a cessation of detonations in the southeast, and an awakening of explosions in the west, led the fugitives to feel that they made no mistake in following the eastward exodus of the wild beasts.

Kaa had an even more definite reason for urging the flight eastward. Somewhere ahead were the plains where all might find easier going. However, since the changing of the river's course and the breaking up of the jungle, he could draw no certain conclusions. Yet, if the plains could be traversed, Kaa premeditated leading the tribe out of the valley by the shortest way, a pass on the east rim, well remembered from his roaming of the valley in the days before the mating and the kingship.

A mile from the river Kaa looked back over the sunken waste they had traversed. The jungle fire was bellying out over the river channel, checked by the numerous pools, the acres of mud, and by the shutting off of the wind under the disrupted river ridge. Several times he looked back in the next hour, observing with relief that the fire died down to a mere smoulder, extinguished in the turbid bogs west of the former river bed. Yet the wind blew on little abated, and the dying of the fire did not appreciably lessen the coiling rivers of smoke sweeping eastward. In the still air of the deeper draws dead smoke was settling in powder-blue lakes, while overhead, ragged robes of it lashed and wavered, vying with the vapor legions for sky supremacy.

But escape from the jungle fire only drew closer attention to the more imminent perils of the sink holes, the boiling pools and the frequent grinding subsidences of the jungle floor. That the subterranean forces were far from spent was evinced by the stunning jars originating underground, and by the repeated vomiting of hot mud from the fissures. And the detonating of the craters miles west was growing more and more violent as the eruptions in the southeast became comparatively inactive. Again and again deep shudders radiated from the new centres of eruption, while muffled peals of subterrestrial thunder and showers of pulverized cinders, falling from miles high, added terror to terror in the hearts of fleeing beast and man.

ABOVE the fog of steam and smoke a film of rain clouds had for hours been gathering as the enormous quantities of vapor encountered the cooler strata of upper air. Gradually the wind died to occasional gusts and flurries. In a period of comparative calm big drops began to spatter down out of the murky sky, pitting the smoother drifts of erupted mud and forming bizarre spots on the clay-caked skins of the bedraggled tribe. A few minutes the presaging shower endured, then the storm broke in all the fury of a cloudburst. For nearly an hour the rain fell in undepleted volume, almost drowning the hordes that battled through it. Then it slackened to intermittent showers, while the canopy of clouds broke into scraggy, bearded shapes and ragged flocks of smudged cirri. Glimpses of a sunlit sky were obtained through widening rents in the rain clouds, and Kaa, at least, was somewhat heartened by the golden pools of sunshine that flitted over the storm-torn valley.

They came abruptly upon the plains. A passing shower, rushing on ahead, disclosed the steaming bosom of the open country, rolling away and up, apparently into the very clouds. Throngs of migrating beasts had arrived ahead of the tribe, and the rain-beaten grass was dotted with weird, toiling forms, that leaped criss-crossed fissures, or wended in and out among one another in varying speeds of progress. No longer was the procession headed eastward. Animals passing that way hours before had mutely relayed the message of danger in the east and south, and the multitudes coming in from the jungle had followed unquestioningly in the trails of preceding fugitives.

Unrecognizably mud-plastered, Kaa swept the plains with blood-shot, swollen eyes. Something in particular he sought, somewhere on the steamy waste, and when he saw it, he leaped half his height into the air, emitting a ringing shout of exultation. Southeast of the spot where the tribe had halted a great herd of bison ploughed north over the soggy tundra, like the shadow of a gigantic cloud. It was the good sign, and for Kaa it must ever portend good fortune.

"Dong-Ga! Dong-Ga!" he shrieked. "Dong-Ga, the good sign! See!"

And he pointed to the herd as he turned to the muddy, battered remnant of the despairing tribe.

They could not help but react to such exuberance, and, as they sighted the herd,

a hoarse cry scattered along the disorderly ranks. A hundred throats took up the shibboleth of their Old Man, as eagerly they grasped at the slightest promise of aid from the omnipotent unknown.

"Dong-Ga! Dong-Ga! Takuluk, Dong-Ga! See, Dong-Ga!"

Buoyed up by a new hope they broke into a staggering run upon the heels of Kaa, who now was wildly bounding and flinging his arms as he sprinted out of the scattered bushes of the jungle fringe. His idea of leaving the valley through the pass in the east rim was now banished. Dong-Ga was headed north. Dong-Ga must know the way to salvation.

Soon they were hurrying among the throngs of wild beasts. Half a mile northeast of them a countless herd of wild horses splattered over the spongy sod, heads low hanging, tails tucked in, while, not more than a mile behind, the massed bison rolled along, a seething corrugation of shaggy shoulders and wet, shining horns, the thunder of their progress silenced only by the blasts of the volcanoes.

CHAPTER XI

THE DELUGE

THE plain had not escaped disintegration in the fury of the seismic spasms that had annihilated the lowlands. Only the absence of dense vegetation and of sticky morasses made the higher land easier footing for the almost exhausted fugitives. As in the jungle, deep fissures wound away to the skyline, crossing and recrossing in formless labyrinths and aimless traceries. Massive tables of tipped and twisted strata contributed to a heterogeneous maze of topographical obstacles. Ambient the various isolated plateaus and between the endless, winding ridges, cracked along their spines, general depression had taken place. For every frowning cornice of naked rock and bulwark of root-bearded gravel, there was a yawning trough, littered with pulverized slag or slivered boulders. It was as if all the hosts of Satan had held communion there in unbridled riot.

Many fissures brimmed with muddy, mangled bodies of dead animals, and but for these the tribe might have been unable to continue their flight. Advance herds of bison and desert horses had plunged into the chasms, filling and bridging the gaps for the thousands pushing them on behind. From north to south broad paths of uptorn, mud-spattered turf bespoke the passage of these preceding multitudes, many of which already had evacuated the valley.

Soon after the tribe swung northward the last of the rain squalls passed over, leaving a wake of drenched wild life behind. The sky speedily cleared more generally than it had since dawn. Droves of fleecy stormscuds hastened eastward on an air current scarcely perceptible below. As if in revenge for hours shut off from the valley, the sun bore down with sultry beams through atmosphere depressively humid. Suspended pockets of fine volcanic dust dazzled the eye like mountains of spun gold, gleaming with comminuted rubies. Streaked pyramids and attenuated pencils of refracted sunlight pierced saffron-lipped rents in banked squadrons of stratified nimbi.

Off in the southwest loomed the inky overhang of the erupting craters, stabbed by prongs of frictional lightning, topped by fluctuating domes of azure-shadowed cumulus. And all the while the sullen, throbbing thunder of the volcanoes shook the shattered valley like a chained Prometheus rocking the heights of Caucasos.

Signs both favorable and unfavorable Kaa observed in anxious scannings of the horizons. The cores of the original eruptions were now almost inactive, their issue having divided into murky funnels disturbed only occasionally by inconsiderable explosions. The craters in the west were reassuringly distant, and with each step taken danger from them grew of less and less moment. Only due east of the tribe was there a disturbing shade. It was the summit of a crater rising grimly behind the east rim, its lower slopes obscured by a dense, motionless fog. Though but a thin curling of smoke exuded from the huge, truncated cone, Kaa yet was wary of it. After what already had occurred he clearly comprehended what would ensue were the tribe caught in such proximity to an eruption. But after progressing so far north that the dreaded peak became almost invisible the burden of anxiety was lifted, and Kaa bent his attention ahead, where at any moment he expected to sight the barren flanks and rugged shoulders of the uplands.

KAA'S forebodings could have had no effect on the behavior of the eastern crater, yet that his anxiety was not founded in pure fancy was demonstrated not

long after he ceased watching it. Without perceivable antecedents the spiral of smoke from the distant cone was suddenly terminated by some suctional force, as the smoke of a chimney is drawn inward by a freakish gust of wind. For minutes, while the multitude struggled on unaware of danger from a different quarter, the sky remained clear above the fog-banked cone, save for the wisps of previously emitted smoke drifting off in thready spirals.

Then the drifting smudges were shattered into hundreds of tumbling vortices by an invisible blast from below. The flat top of the crater bulged upward as by the impact of a prodigious fist driving from the bowels of the earth. For a fraction of a second the peak withstood the blow, giving stubbornly under the terrific strain, then the whole of it split into jagged serrations. Malformed masses of tuff heaved sluggishly outward. Black smoke, streaked with livid fire, gushed with terrific velocity from the blasted cone, shooting up in a dense column that spouted at a tremendous height into the semblance of a monstrous tree, which multiplied itself a hundred times almost instantaneously. From the belching nucleus of this vast spectacle massive fragments of the mountain burst in a spray of meteoric parabolas, limned with radiations of intense heat. Hydra-headed rockets, with comet tails, spiralled thousands of feet into the shattered sky, shooting back and forth in a bewildering maze of smoke trails, shedding great swaying shrouds of dust and ashes. Plunging tons of luminous agglomerate detonated miles from the eruptive centre in a shower of smoking projectiles. Then the central smoke column collapsed, its base bursting into an immense, opening fan of coiling funnels and wavering streamers.

A snow-white pillar of vapor shot up from the centre of the fan, instantly inflating to voluminous billows, miles above the plain. An instant only the column of steam remained, then it was succeeded by a colossal gusher of reddish brown, which drove into the milky bubbles like a bloody sword. Tentacles of crimson clutched and clung and wound around the billows of steam now overlapping in trefoil and quatrefoil, boiling like molten silver above the sable flanges of a sooted pot. Devouring vortices of oily amber swirled in and out of the whirling spheres and crumbling towers. In a space of seconds the eructation swelled to immeasurable proportions, spanning miles of the plain, forming and reforming in gigantic, kaleidoscopic shapes and gnarled, gargantuan shadows.

The whole of the crater's opening was soundless to the ears of the hurrying fugitives. None was aware of it before the flying sound waves radiated the intervening miles, carrying the concussion and air displacement of the first explosion. Even then, so vast was the diapason, that the ear could not register it. Earth and air swelled, shuddered, groaned. Whole battalions of the fleeing throng were flattened to the lurching earth. Dazed, deafened, none knew whence the blow had fallen. Blood welled from nostrils, ears rang with a timbre as of hammered steel; deathly nausea gripped them as brains swam with the giddy gyration of the earth.

Struggling to his feet Kaa squinted through stinging, cinder tears, shocked almost as much by what he saw as by the terrific explosion. Instinctively, he flung up his arms to shut out the mighty cloud boiling and spreading from the crater top. Even as he looked the fulmineous mass appeared to leap out at him, with long, tenuous talons tearing at the sky and raking at the plain. The dilating impact of the second detonation whisked from Kaa's lips a frantic roar of warning to the tribe. He was lifted from his feet; a pressure as of deep water deflated his lungs. Reeling, he caught his balance, as the plain swayed and staggered, then ran on far ahead of the demoralized tribe.

The second detonation had not been as violent as the first, and almost all managed to keep their feet. Then a cyclonic, blistering wind, laden with powdered cinders and motes of fused rock, rushed across the plain from the crater, sweeping all before it over the tortured earth, which now was faltering, quivering, like a live thing under the lashes of a Titan. The skyline dipped and pitched like a rolling sea; segments of turf were flung into the air; hundreds of boulders rolled and bounded over the wasted plain. A rapidly detonating barrage, like heavy artillery mounted above and below, set in after the initial impacts, belaboring the shattered land like well-aimed thunderbolts.

WITH the last remaining vestige of strength man and beast fled before the crashing thunder and the sinister cloud. Behind the scattered band of troglodytes the bison broke into a lumbering gallop, the mud-sucking roar of their hoof-beats lost in the vastly greater roar of the volcano. Thousands of echoing thun-

ders rolled back and forth across the valley, compounding, multiplying, till sky and earth were a stentorian medley of thunders, bounding and rebounding from rim to rim, tumbling up the swaying slopes of crumbling draws like boisterous giants at a furious game.

All the while the turgid deluge gushed unremittingly from the decapitated crater. Tons and tons of atomized débris surcharged the air. In minutes, half the sky was darkened like the inside of a windowless room. The crater itself was lost to view as the gigantic cloud settled and spread. Only the mighty towers of steam and ashes, soaring into the sky, marked the core of the inferno, from which a russet pall, splotched with snowy pools of steam, flowed over the plains, backing up from the ragged outer edge in a series of rolling terraces, arched by the milky whorls and crimson plumes in the zenith.

From the stupendous height to which they had been hurled showers of rock particles and cinders began to fall in flurries like sleet and hail. Vast areas were blotted out by the stinging storm. Billions of mud globules followed upon the swifter falling rubble. The whole plain took on a shade of reddish brown, man and beast alike transfigured into animated clay statues, grotesquely scurrying through the tumult. Then came billows of feathery ash, thick as snow, hot, choking, blinding.

Through the haze of flying débris, the sun, a disc of blood within a lambent aura, glared down like a vivid, frightened eye, dimming and blinking with the thickening of the cloud. A glow as of twilight after a rain storm suffused the land. Then the sun vanished in the black heavens as if in flight from the hellish din of the disintegrating valley.

In the mad rush to escape annihilation by the newly opened crater, Kaa, Chee, and the strongest and fleetest males and females broke away from the weaker ones in abandoned flight. Thus the tribe was scattered over a distance of nearly a half mile, the feeblest in the rear, other groups laboring between foremost and rearmost as varying vitalities allowed. The bison herd rapidly overhauled the rearmost stragglers, trampling them under. Likewise, the slowest of the wild beasts were run down. The trail of the herd became a gruesome chaos of bodies, mud and sod fragments, all swiftly obliterated by the falling ashes.

Only by contour were man and beast differentiated under their thick coating of ash and pumice. Once more all were intermingled in a frightful potpouri wherein there was but one motive, to battle northward with foot, tooth and nail. Mastodons, tapirs, wolves, sabre-tooths rushed unnoticed among the tribesmen. Sometimes the faltering females clutched madly at the long hair of a jungle beast, thus helped along in the abandoned retreat, unless the beast turned upon his encumbrance with bared teeth. Little could be seen, and little was felt save a griping fear that bit deep in every breast. Like an army routed by overwhelming enemies, the maddened horde scattered over the ruined plain, spilled this way and that as wave after wave of earth shocks passed and repassed, doubled back and burst upward. Anon, hundreds were flattened to the earth as a vast section of sinking strata struck the adamant bottom of an emptied reservoir far underground. Again, the pits of their stomachs flew to their throats with the dizzy uprush of tilted tract.

WHATEVER idea Kaa had had of saving the weaker of the tribe was vanished now. In the grip of blind fear, not so much of death as of the nature of life preceding death, he stretched his powerful legs in strides yards long. Even Chee was lost sight of in that fog of ashes and dust, for all the women looked the same, and even the nostrils were useless to smell with, filled as they were with the acrid odor of brimstone. By instinct alone Kaa ran, feeling each choking breath would be his last.

Only a ribbon of sky in the northwest remained clear beneath the dark crater cloud closing down over the valley. Through this tenuous interstice the sun's rays beamed feebly, growing fainter and fainter as the ribbon narrowed to a mere thread along the swaying horizon. At last, even this opening was shut off by the cloud, plunging the valley into the blackness of a deep pit, save for the unsteady luminance emanating from the interior of the crater, fitfully reflected by the bulging overhang of the cloud canopy.

Then a new source of light was manifested, outshining the ruddy glare of the incandescent matter. Lightning, caused by the terrific atmospheric friction of eviscerated masses, appeared in brilliant flushes in the east and south. Flaming spheres sprang up and leaped with dizzy speed across the glowering cloud. Brilliant balls of fire spun hither and thither,

dancing, flitting, vanishing, reappearing like spectral will-o'-the-wisps. Broad bands of orange flame tore crazily out of the black canopy, splitting into writhing crackles of many-tined forks and livid, multi-branching rivers.

From points miles between the vivid bolts dashed back and forth, like thunderbolts hurled by embattled gods. Blinding glares and searing tongues flared and lashed like great, flaming whips and enormous, storm-torn trees. One moment the murky cloud canopy glowed like an inverted sea of live coals; the next, all was plunged in impenetrable, palpable gloom, or suffused by a dull red glow like that from the red-hot grates of a mighty furnace.

Under the vivid flashes the herd of bison could be seen thundering relentlessly on, a torrent of gleaming horns and undulant shoulders. Gaunt ghosts of beasts they were, for their hoofbeats made no audible sound above the volcanic tumult. More and more of the tribe were overtaken and trampled by the rushing herd; groups of children, knots of exhausted females and hunters, vanished beneath the avalanche of churning hoofs. In brief glimpses, as he ran, Kaa caught the oily sheen of the heaving herd, and he was encouraged. Even had he known the carnage wrought among the stragglers of his dying band his trust in the good sign would have remained unshaken. His was the incalculable, unexplainable faith of puny, finite man, hoping, struggling to the bitter end even 'mid the crash of crumbling worlds, who knew him not.

The movement of the plain had become so vast as to be imperceptible save in the most acute spasms. Only a sensation of vertigo attended the wide swinging and dipping of the undermined valley floor. At the extremity of mile-long arcs a sudden jar sometimes flung the fleeing horde to their knees or flat upon their faces. Again running up the slope of a subsiding plane, they labored against the impetus of the sliding earth, legs crumpling under them as if they bore great burdens. Again they ran with a downward movement, as if downhill, though the slope was too vast to be perceived by the physical eye.

Low in the west three aureolas of angry red marked the activity of the cones that had opened that morning. Shocks from these collided with shocks from the eastern crater, while the original eruptions, now more south than east, appeared to reopen under the pounding detonations of the latest eruption. Under the combined bombardment the valley crumpled to a wreckage of raw earth, cavernous fissures, shattered trees and silt-clogged undergrowth. Always the sinking tendency accompanied the movements of the land, while from the mighty deluge rushing out of the eastern volcano luminous fingers of lava ran out over the ash-smothered plain, shooting along with tremendous speed, like fire-fused serpents, mottled with glowing gold, horned with gaseous green and vitriol blue.

THROUGH the storm of stinging cinders nothing could be seen of the uplands, where all hoped to escape the brunt of the tempest. Yet Kaa knew they could not be far away. Again and again he strained his stinging eyes through the gusty pall, hoping to glimpse the loom of headland, or the jagged crest of barren ridge. But the uncertain flare of lightning frequently shut off the view in Stygian gloom, just when he imagined he saw a shape of high land. The only definite objects perceivable were the dusty, hulking forms of wild beasts ploughing the powdery drifts of ash. Occasionally, behind, brief glimpses he caught of one of his kind, running before a waving sea of horns and gleaming eyes.

Not long after the total shrouding of the valley by the crater cloud a new note welled up, like bass harmony in the jarring symphony of the infuriated elements. Vast and sibilant it was, a sea-sighing, subdued, yet of such magnitude in that subdual that it absorbed the more trenchant sound vibrations. Nearer and nearer it drew out of the south, like the concrement of a million winds, sullen, muffled, somnolent. Yet there was not the capriciousness of wind about the sound. It never wavered in volume. At first but a hoarse whisper, it rose in gradual crescendo to a majestic fortissimo, rising and rising when it seemed it could become no louder. Under the sound the rocking valley quivered like a bevelled reed.

Kaa cast backward a fearful glance as he perceived the sound. Something about it chilled the blood and lifted the hair. He was prepared for death by earthly agency, but that which he now heard partook of something far removed from earth, something of the unknown out of which came unconjecturable horrors. At sight of the thousand bison backs coming behind he was somewhat reassured, partly because of the good sign thus symbolized, partly be-

cause he deceived himself that the sound was from the hoofs of the ever-nearing herd. Running, as he was, with the last font of energy left in him, he could not look for long over his shoulder, and when he did his observations were at best unsteady and fragmentary. Perhaps that was why he did not perceive the pale vision attending the deafening roar, until it was upon the great herd.

An endless bank of agitated mist it appeared to be, flung up against the scarlet shadowed gloom as if blown magically out of the earth. Again Kaa looked back as the lightning bandied across the heavens with nearly steady illumination. The wall had grown to montanic proportions. Each part was moving as if separate from the whole. Pale green and seething white was the body of the wall, topped by turbulent combs of rubricose froth, like a snow-capped mountain reflecting a crimson sunset. Both tangible and intangible was the fantastic apparition as it bore out of the south with a roar that muffled the crater canyon, burying itself into the brain through ruptured eardrums. Swift upon the bison herd the loom of chameleon shadows surged northward, a mass of twisting traceries upon a curtain of fluid emerald.

The black heavens blazed again with tortuous streamers of fire. Kaa had one more vivid glimpse of that sweeping mountain, and then he looked no more. Hoofed legs, gaping jaws, bloated torsos he saw whirling in the advancing wall. Gnarled masses of tree roots toppled down a sliding, concave precipice; huge tree trunks tossed about like match-sticks among sodden nets of vines and fern, all seething in a frightful chaos. In that brief glimpse Kaa knew at last what it was—the sea—pouring in upon the sunken land!

Scream after scream of mortal terror broke from Kaa's lips, screams that he could not hear himself. He lost consciousness of his laboring legs as he hurled himself into the void ahead, now dark, now glaring bright. Forgotten was fatigue, gone was pain; only the will to live he responded to under the lash of unreasoning fear that none but the demented would not have felt under similar circumstances.

But a fraction of a second had intervened between the moment Kaa saw the tidal wave and the moment the sloping front of salt water overhauled the bison. The writhing beasts, mouths wide in inaudible bellowing, were whisked away like so much dead wood. In a welter of débris and foaming water the whole herd vanished in a trice. Then the icy flood swept up the rearmost of the tribe, devoured the throngs of jungle beasts, bearing all away among the tossing wastage of the ruined valley.

FAR in the lead, Kaa ran, breasted only by flying wolves and moose-deer. A finger of the flood crawled up his legs, freezing his blistered skin. One stride more he splashed in knee-deep water, then the full force of the flood smote him, shoving, lifting, then swallowing him. Against the crushing pressure of legion tons of water he struggled frantically to rise, flesh shrivelling in the chilling bath. His ears rang; motes of fire shot across his eyelids; soggy forms brushed against him. Into a mass of wriggling legs of drowning bison he floated, stunned by the blow of a churning hoof before a vortex swept him clear. Once groping fingers dragged at his legs. A rough, hairless skin rasped at his thigh and was gone. His lungs burned like fire in his breast. Then he burst out of the flood, sucking in the sulphurous air with greedy gasps.

Through the dashing spray he caught fragmentary glimpses of the raging flood, black and crimson-tinged, gleaming like boiling oil under the blazing sky. Struggling life-forms beat the water everywhere, singly, enmassed, in scattered groups and duelling doubles. Floating islands of clogged débris, ponderous segments of disembowelled sod were borne along, rocking, colliding, gyrating. Upon these waterlogged rafts hordes of animals had climbed, or were climbing, fighting for footing among themselves, sinking their supports sometimes by the very weight of numbers and wild struggles.

In an instant Kaa saw this, then a whirlpool bore him down, in the toils of which he was helpless. A slowly spinning tree trunk saved him as it broke the momentum of the vortex. Again he burst, gasping, blowing, to the surface, swimming futilely, smothered by foam and spray.

In a brief interval of total darkness unexpected aid manifested itself. A hairy body heaved up under Kaa as it rose out of the depths. He was pushed aside, almost overturned. A glare of lightning revealed what it was—a bull bison pounding the water within arm's reach, snorting spray as it labored in the current. Swiftly Kaa clamped his fingers in the long hair of the broad back, thus allowed to rest as both he and his living life buoy glided

on into a comparatively smooth stretch of water. Black shapes of land loomed on either side of them, rocky summits flaming like heated iron under the glare of volcanic lightning.

Kaa and the big bull to which he had attached himself soon were left far in the rear of the angry front of the wave. All about them were other bison that had survived the deluge long enough to be drifted into the calmer waters behind the raging vanguard. Long, gleaming horns and broad faces dotted the water by hundreds, all headed north since not the strongest swimmer could have breasted or angled against the current. But, far outnumbering the living were the bodies of the dead; others could be seen sinking and rising in the last throes of drowning. The waving trunks of mastodons, weird signals of distress, wriggled above the chaos, while the roars and humanlike screams of terrorized beasts could occasionally be heard above the somewhat subsided rumble of the deluge.

Past a jagged headland, that bulged in a lightning glare, Kaa and the bison swept with giddy speed. It was Kaa's nearest approach to land after the wave had picked him up, and he divined he must be deep among the northern ridges and plateaus. While dimly considering a dash for land, he felt the water well up under him, as if somewhere below it had struck an immovable obstruction. Almost directly ahead a rotund butte burst out of the darkness in a blinding glare. Then the darkness was alive with ghostly forms of great breakers, lashing the summits of beetling ridges, tossing tons of recrement upon the rocky heights.

A violent shock was relayed suddenly from the swimming bison to the body of its human parasite. As if plucked back by a giant under-water hand, the bison was jerked from under Kaa, as it struck bottom. Kaa shot ahead, hands filled with hair. Hard rock was beneath him, smooth and flat, flooded with shallow water. Into a yielding obstruction he rolled, coming to a dead stop on hands and knees. All around him water was spilling over the edges of a large area of stone, apparently the flat top of a butte. He had been thrown against a heap of driftwood and dead bodies. By it he was prevented from slipping into the mill-race on the other side of the rock. Only a brief breathing spell he was allowed, then another wave inundated the promontory, tore him away, sweeping the rock clean of the débris in a seething welter.

AGAIN Kaa floated on through blackness oppressive and tangible, fighting with the last of his strength to keep his head above water. Minutes later he was whirled into an eddy and up a wide draw between ridges. Swimming feebly, succumbing to overpowering weariness, he was gently deposited on the slope of a steep bank, up which he scrambled drunkenly, gasping, grunting, sick and faint with fatigue, lungs and stomach partly filled with bitter, roily water. The roar of the flood drove him on. With leaden feet he ran from it. As in a dream he saw wet, hulking forms likewise struggling northward through gusts of fine dust, showers of cinders and icy draughts of spindrift. Once he thought he saw two of his kind struggling through the fog, then in a space of darkness he lost them, and when the lightning glared again they were gone. Wounded beasts, dragging themselves along, obstructed the passage of those still alive. Thousands of dead were heaped in winding winrows among splintered shafts of pinites and sodden heaps of matted underbrush and earth.

In pitch darkness Kaa's feet collided with a soft, hairless body. He fell to his knees, hands groping at the obstruction, which seemed strangely familiar. The lightning showed him the dead face of one of his kind, and with a shrill cry he staggered on a little farther, coming at last against a high barrier of stranded débris. Weakly he tried to climb over, but the barrier gave way under his fumbling hands.

He slipped back to the stony earth, rolled against the wet mass, becoming conscious that there was a sort of cavity ahead of him. Into this he blindly crawled, away from the thunder of the tremendous surf. He dropped upon his stomach, falling into a stupor out of which he vainly tried to shake himself. Deeper and deeper he fell into a darkness of the mind, shot with red stabs of flame. His lips framed incoherencies, while his legs and arms grew numb and stiff. He was babbling when he passed into the nightmare-ridden slumber of complete exhaustion.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW LAND

HOW long he lay there in the cavity he had no way of knowing. Time was endlessly prolonged in dream units that hung for imaginary ages in

agonizing suspense. Grisly nightmares loomed and faded in spectral panorama. The booming of the flood breakers and the clamor of the craters combined in ceaseless excitation of a mind dismembered from the sleeping body. Though no sound quite awakened him, he yet was retained in a fever of endless struggle to awaken from the coma of absolute fatigue.

Hours and hours he glided upward through space incalculable. Then, as suddenly as he had been immersed in it, the smoke and fire cleared away and in a region of boundless night he hung suspended by an intangible thread. A chill draught flowed over him like the emanation of a sea of ice. He heard distant thunder and the subdued murmur of great waves. Swaying impendent, he struggled in darkness so thick it beat him back and down like quicksand.

Wide awake, he lay quietly, unable to ascertain his exact position, whether upside down, prone or suspended. At first he was wholly unaware he was awake, for the nightmare of reality was inextricably confused with the imageries of troubled dreams. He awaited stoically another phantom. But the scene did not change, and slowly he came to comprehend that he was awake and alive.

Damp tendrils of vines trailed chill fingers over his skin; icy drops of water dripped from a source he could not see. In his swollen mouth he tasted the bitter flavor of brine and brimstone. His senses told him it should be day. Yet insufferable night weighed down darker than the interior of the great barrow, nor was the warm body of Chee beside him.

All was topsy-turvy, confused, inverted. He was unable to remember the bewildering sequence of events preceding his plight. He moved one leg. The knee encountered a hard, cold, tapering object, the feel of which startled him with a pang of dread. He groped along his thigh. There were more of the tapering objects, and they proved to be slightly hooked. It was the paw of a sabre-tooth, but in the instant he identified it he knew the sabre-tooth was dead.

Movement he accomplished with considerable pain. Hours he had lain in the damp cavity and weakened tissues had absorbed the chill. Turning his head, he perceived an opaque blur in the circumventing darkness. The opening, for opening it was, helped him to orientate himself, and in a surge of disturbing recollections all came back: the volcanoes, the earthquake, the flood, his final stumbling flight from the waves that had ended at the barrier of drift which he could not climb.

Stiff and sore, he crawled from the cavity, pushing through a bank of ashes a foot high. Dazed and bewildered, he got to his feet, cinders clinging to his hands, and stared about him. Subdued booming sounded in several distant quarters. Not far away he could hear the wash of waves as upon the seashore, and as his eyes travelled over the dimly visible blanket of ash enveloping the earth he caught the oscillation of a vast expanse of water.

He lifted his eyes to the sky where from the overhanging cloud a mist of dust infinitesimally fine fell ceaselessly, noiselessly. Looking southeast, he observed that the crater, whose eruption had almost buried the tribe, still was in action, though not nearly so violent. All along the skyline in the southeast and southwest radiations of seething infernos glared fitfully.

COUGHING spasmodically as he inhaled the irritating dust Kaa stood there as one in a dream, unable to understand. With eyes dull and listless he gazed, weary of seeing, numbed by reaction, tired of living with the price of life so exorbitant. In this gloomy desolation, this depressing aftermath of terror that transcended terror, his mind was dead to impressions, his scope of comprehension far exceeded. The darkness pressed in upon him until with acute pain he felt it. Death was everywhere, even the earth was ashes, and he alone stood alive in the land of the dead.

Knowing not which way to turn, he contemplated his predicament, slowly revolving the sequence of events since the opening of the craters. The tide of life welled a little higher when he recalled the nature of his escape from the flood. For an instant as he pictured the symbolic figure of the bull bison, he was suffused with a glow of excitement. Dong-Ga had carried him to land. The good sign of O-Wa had not failed him. Even from the unleashed fury of all the bad signs in the unknown the good sign had saved him.

By no discouraging processes of reasoning did he spoil his faith with dour materialities. It did not remotely occur to him that there was a quite natural cause for the bison being his means of support instead of another animal. That the bison had been by far the more numerous of the powerful beasts swept up with him in the

tidal wave he might have been aware, yet he did not associate this with his rescue. No, he saw only the beautiful illusion of a kind hand out of the infinite which had hands both kind and cruel.

But he returned again to disconsolate depression. Dong-Ga had gone on and left him in the end. In a strange land of awful solitude he had been deserted by his guardian power. Not even an agouti was to be found to cheer him with living company. Of what use was life, he felt, when there were no other lives to live for, nor any life to live by?

The crunch of his footsteps in the cinders grated unpleasantly in his ears as he proceeded gingerly toward the noise of the surf, eyes adjusting themselves to the faint illumination. Everywhere he saw the remains of the receding flood. Wraith-like masses in ashy shrouds marked the tombs of the drowned, and huge, sprawling cinder-smothered mounds of driftwood loomed on either side. Every heap he stealthily detoured as he watched for unexpected moves, self-protective faculties still instinctively strong though he no longer treasured the flickering flame thus protected.

HE CAME at length to the edge of the promontory whereon he had outrun the waves. Here he paused, stupidly surveying a darkly glimmering expanse of ground swells that stretched southward into the gloom as far as he could see. He had had a notion of the sea returning to its old limits many miles south, and again he was sorely perplexed and depressed by discovery of such fell inversion of things as they should have been. Before him was the valley; unerringly his junglecraft told him that.

Yet the valley was not there. Only a vast sea confronted him, a sea he never before had seen, lonely and forbidding, like a dark mirror hiding the secret of a million dead, with its waves whispering of that secret in an unknown tongue. Somewhere beneath that murmuring infinity of bitter water lay the sunlit valley of his youth, the cozy tribal barrows, the fertile plains, the jungle teeming with game easy to be gotten; somewhere in that wide, watery grave, which never would give up its dead, were the bodies of his tribe, scattered along the trail of destruction, and the ships of Time would sail that surging main knowing naught of the tragic traces of those who slumbered under the deep. Dimly Kaa conceived of this, and the idea plunged him into unconquerable sadness. His throat quivered with aching spasms. No elegy could he pour upon white paper and express his irreparable wrongs, his inconsolable sorrow, yet because he could not express himself he was in nowise freed of the emotion needing expression.

He turned aimlessly from the sea along the edge of the plateau that now was the new shoreline. Materialities were at that moment far removed from his reactions, especially were hunger and thirst dulled by the pangs of dejection. Yet suddenly his step quickened, his head was raised alertly. Wet hair and raw hide he scented. Quickly his darting eyes located the object discovered by his nose. It was a moose-deer, partly submerged in the salt water, the body washed half clean of ashes by the lapping waves.

The moment he laid eyes on the meat he was keenly conscious of a gnawing in the pit of his stomach, and his tongue was bathed with drip. As he slunk upon the moose-deer he was all beast, intently obeying the mandates of the body. For hours he had eaten nothing. The idea of food had been buried in the anxiety to preserve the pulse beat of the structure which required food. His nostrils had been filled with the tangs of danger, ash and brimstone. But now the exposed carcass pierced all other smells with its message of meat. Loneliness was forgotten in the inrush of bodily cravings. He pounced upon the moose-deer, seized it by the hind quarters and dragged it all the way out of the water. He had no knife. There was no time to hunt a sharp stone. Here was pressing business, that must be done with tools at hand. Faintness seized him as he crouched over a haunch and tore away the tough skin with his teeth, spitting out hair and rind until he cleared an inviting portion of steak. No demigod aesthete was he to abstain from food no matter how abused his spirit. Had primal man resorted to the hunger strike when confronted by grim, merciless fate, modern man would not have existed.

As he ate pound after pound with unconcealed voracity, his grip on life grew stronger. A fever of new vigor came into his blood. He was flushed with rising spirits. He began rapidly to adjust himself to circumstances. All was not lost was the idea inspired by the moose-deer haunch. Where there was food, and the strength of food, there was life and the desire for life.

As the laborer gains courage for his hours of toil while consuming a heavy meal, so Kaa gained courage to wrest victory from defeat, to make the most of the little that was left from all that he had held invaluable.

WHEN he could eat no more, when his stomach stood out until it was painful for him to bend, he arose from the excarnated haunch and rubbed his hands along his thighs, like a wrestler making ready for the match. He was drunk with his gorge, and his brain teemed with conjectures. Interrogatory mind-pictures rose to be answered, and of these the most insistent concerned the tribe and Chee. He was staggered with the appalling probability that all were dead and he alone alive. He might have become inured to the wiping out of the tribe if he could have had Chee.

Exercise and food contrived to relieve the stiffness of his legs. His steps grew brisker and longer, his eyes brighter and sharper. He began to search the shadowy heaps of slain on every hand, pawing away the ashes from forms that appeared to resemble human bodies. But, as his search revealed nothing, not even a dead body of his kind, he decided on other means of discovering if any were alive. He stopped, filled his lungs with air, and, forcing back a cough, roared out across the tomblike wastes the call of assembly.

"Woo-wa-a-ah," he thundered, clinging to the vowel until his breath was spent and his throat strained and sore, until his own ears were ringing from the sound of his voice flung deadened back at him by the dense atmosphere.

Long he listened intently. There were no echoes, and had there been echoes he would have understood without confusion. And if there were no echoes, neither were there answers. Only the sepulchral silence, emphasized by the distant rumble of the craters, wrapt him round again. Once more he drew a deep breath and roared the call of the Old Man to the tribe. Again silence beat his voice back into his ears, and the whisper of the sea increased to the vast sibilance of a thousand voices droning a cryptic anthem.

He walked on a little farther through the cinders, the dust rising and choking him where the sea spray had not settled it. Scarcely a dozen paces from where he had first sounded the call he found five of his kind under the ashes, locked in one another's arms. The sight made him frantic. He dared not conceive that all were drowned and he the only one of his kind that had survived. Again he filled his lungs and roared till his voice rattled in his throat. It was as if he had shouted beneath the folds of a heavy bison skin. The dust clouds swallowed the sound, and it became only another dead thing among the trillions of dead things.

Scarcely hoping for an answer, he listened. A sound came to his ears. At first he thought it an echo. Again it came, and this time he was not mistaken. It was an answering cry from the throat of human kind.

"Ai-e-ya, ai-e-ya!" it floated feebly over the waste of ash, confusing as to location; it might have even come from underground.

Somewhere north along the seashore he was sure the sound had originated. That way he leaped, running ankle-deep in ashes, sliding, stumbling, vaulting obstructing débris. He ran as if pursued, and he whined. His kind! His kind! That answering voice from the darkness was to him an angel choir singing of the Son of God. He roared repeatedly as he ran, his voice cracking to falsetto. The answering cries were nearer. Now he knew that more than one were answering, yet they seemed not to have moved from the place he first had heard them, and the timbre of their voices was faltering, as if they were afraid. Guided by the shouts he finally found them.

There were thirteen squatting round the clean-gnawed bones of a peccary. At first they cowered down in fear of him, as if unable to believe he was actually in the flesh, and not an apparition of the frightful terrors they so recently had experienced. But they did not flee, nor even move from their positions save to shrink more closely together. In his great joy at finding them Kaa did not consider why they had not come to him at his call, and if he had done so he would have understood and forgiven them.

"Bu-go-da! My people!" he cried as he fell upon his hands and knees among them, devouring them with yearning eyes, allowing them to feel of him, look at him and reassure themselves that it was actually their Old Man.

They were not demonstrative. There seemed no room for gladness in their heavy hearts. They were dazed to stupidity, with eyes large and sad in faces haggard and twitching. Frequently they jerked their

heads about in fearsome glances behind them. With each mutter of volcanic thunder they cowered and quivered. In dumb resignation they seemed awaiting but one fate, to which they were meekly abandoned, and that fate was death.

FOR minutes Kaa could say nothing, make no intelligible sign. Never before had he felt such unmitigated devotion for his people. He named the faces that he recognized, sniffed the noses of the ones he did not know. Among the women was Mam, mother of Chee, who worshipped Kaa as she had feared the brutish husband he had succeeded in the kingship. Gor-Ba, Dee-Bo, Kee he named among the males. The other two were youths he did not know by name. That eight of the thirteen were females the Old Man did not consider singular. It seemed to him a most natural consequence. The female he knew to be possessed of mysterious powers of life prolongation, and while she could not strike the deadly blow in the hunt or the death-duel, in the face of forces of race extermination, where human brains and thews were of no efficacy, she survived with a life-tenacity equal to man's. Kaa was aware of this and attached no significance to it, though he was afforded stronger hope that Chee would be found alive, whose absence from the surviving ones had been a bitter blow.

Gor-Ba, the oldest of the males, Kaa first questioned concerning the fate of the tribe, and how these few had come through the flood alive. But Gor-Ba only stared stupidly at his chief, muttering "woo-ga, woo-ga," repeatedly. Mam it was who volunteered information. By signs she conveyed a vague, fragmentary account of what had happened.

It appeared that the fortunate thirteen had been running in a group of a score of the tribe when the wave had struck. About half of these reached the surface alive near one of the floating islands bowling along behind the crest of the wave. Thirteen of the number reaching the surface had managed to climb upon the island before drowning. Thus they had been deposited upon the uplands near the spot where Kaa had found them. Like Kaa, they had slept for unreckoned hours because of exhaustion, and they knew not whether it was day or night. They had heard the Old Man's call shortly after awakening and eating the peccary, but they had been afraid to move, at first believing that their ears had deceived them.

Mam knew nothing of Chee. She wailed plaintively upon being reminded of the probable fate of her daughter. Kaa also was plunged in gloom as he brooded over the destruction of the tribe and the almost certain fate of Chee. Around him the last of the tribe whimpered and complained, hands pressed to bowed heads, while the thunder of the craters rolled on and the mists of dust fell softly upon the ashes of a ruined world.

It was Kaa who roused at last. At his command they all arose and deployed themselves in a line perhaps three paces between each one. Thus began the search for others of their kind that might have survived. Westward they continued along the edge of the sea, examining each likely looking drift or mound. When they had gone almost half a mile along the crests of ridges and valley rims that now flanked arms of the sea, they turned back and repeated the search eastward. A few bodies they found, a very few, and none were alive. Frequently Kaa sounded the call of assembly, and all listened with bated breath. But no more answering calls were heard. Toward the end of the search eastward, a quarter mile from where Kaa had been drifted to land, they found Chee.

She had been thrown high upon the shore by the wave and the ashes had covered her so thickly that had Kaa not scratched them away he would have passed her by. He had expected this, yet the bitter truth cut his heart like a keen-edged blade. He knelt over the grime-defaced body, identifying it more by sense of smell than by sight. He dug away more of the cinders, whereupon he found close to Chee's breast, clamped in the death contractions of the drowned, the body of their first-born.

ONCE more, as he had over the tomb of O-Wa, Kaa lifted his face to the sky and poured his grief into the weird death-song of his kind. Wild and quavering it broke from his throat, and with the first note the others joined him. Like the clamor of a wolf pack the dirge rose in faltering cadence, now one alone singing, now all in chorus. Almost like laughter it was sometimes, but it was a laughter that would chill the heart and contract the walls of the throat. Once loosed, their grief knew no bounds. Stupidity vanished as the threnody lifted them out of themselves. For all the tribe they mourned, for the homeland buried under the sea

they sang. All the sentiment they could not speak in words they expressed in the death-song, and by the death-song they were comforted and restored to a measure of strength.

"Ay-ya, yi-ka, lo-ah,
Ya-ki, ki-ya, ay-ya."

There was wild harmony in it, for it was born of the sounds of the wind, the sea, and the calls of the beast and bird world. To mimicry of natural sounds was added strong feeling, derivative of reason which reverses the past and by that reverence mourns the passing of the past, which can not be restored.

Kaa spent his own grief and while the others wailed he heaped the ashes back upon the body of Chee and the man-child. Once before he had gone the long way from the grave of that which had meant most to him, and already he was considering future procedure. When the dirge had quieted to a mere whining among the women, and all had squatted dejectedly about the grave of Chee, Kaa addressed them, speaking what was in his mind. He began far back in the past with the dim knowledge he had of how the tribe had come into the valley. Knowing nothing of facts, he spoke that which came to his mind by spontaneity and by the inspiration of the tribe's destruction. He opened new worlds for the thirteen who listened with eyes raptly fixed upon the face of the wonder male.

Their lips moved with his, sometimes they repeated a sign. Much they could not grasp, so obscure was the relativity between the symbolic connotations. Yet they saw themselves rising from nothing, and they understood that now they were back to nothing, that they must go the long way, where, from what was left another tribe should be born into the world. Kaa made them understand responsibility, which was beyond the instinct of self-preservation. By this understanding of a new motive or duty they were inspired to save themselves, to rise above the trouble that had weighed them down until they were resigned to merciful death in the barren land.

"The fire and the flowing stone have taken the people. It is the bad sign. The sea has come upon the good valley of the people. The long way we must go where the trees and the beasts live. Dong-Ga, the good sign, who saved the Old Man of you, knows where is the good land. See! All the beasts have gone from the place of the long sleep. The last of the people must go in the footsteps of the beasts. In the new land we will find the good hunting ground and make our barrows. There our children will be born until the tribe is strong again and there are many."

"We thirst, and there is no sweet water," complained Gor-Ba.

"The blood of Dong-Ga we will drink till we find the sweet water," replied Kaa.

"We will come to the end of the land where the sky comes down," doubted Kee.

"Where the beasts go the land does not end," answered Kaa.

"Where Kaa goes there Mam will go," said Mam, and her eyes were blazing with the light of new hope.

Then a strange thing happened. As one, the seven other females raised closed hands in affirmation of Mam's declaration. And Kaa saw that the female kind was built of undying fires that drove man on when man was weary and his mind was dead.

"Uncha," said Kaa, and he strode away from the mound of Chee, the others falling in behind, hump shouldered, cinder-grimed hair hanging beneath their chins like hoary beards.

The trails of the beasts' migration led northeast almost undeviatingly. Over a darkened land, covered with ash, a land of naked ridges, flat-topped, and draws miles long, they trekked stolidly, without speech, and always the Old Man stalked in the lead, watching, hoping for favorable signs. They ate the dead and dying of the beast horde; they drank the blood of the wounded. They found no water, no trees, nothing but the burnt land stretching endlessly on under the cloud of ash that shut out the sky from horizon to horizon so that they moved in constant dusk.

WAR BONDS ARE WAR WEAPONS—
☆ ☆ **SAVE AND SERVE!** ☆ ☆
☆ ☆

THREE days northeast they trailed before they saw the sun, a pale red disc wanly peering from the dust canopy. The way was lightened, but the increasing light only made the prospect more dreary as they saw more clearly the character of the dread land surrounding them. With every ridge they topped they saw ahead mile upon mile of forbidding desert, yet they did not comment futilely.

They moved steadily, covering prodigious distances between short intervals of rest. One female fell from a precipice, and they left her behind beneath a mound of ashes. A young male sickened and died, they knew not why. Him, too, they left on the road of bones, and the twelve went on and on, while the days grew brighter and at last the sun sank visibly in a sea of wine far southeast where lay the inundated valley and the smoking craters. Thinner and thinner became the overhanging dust clouds. They saw the stars again. A new moon shone through the reddish haze like a reeking scimitar.

They wondered that the land was so big. Never had they dreamed the world was so wide. And still the trail of the beasts did not end, save for those thousands whose bodies thronged the way at the end of the trail of life.

What remained of the last bison herd to evacuate the valley they overtook on the tenth day of the journey. A mile or so they stayed behind the herd, feeding off the dying, vainly trying to quench their terrible thirsts in the juices of less fortunate life-forms. Sparse patches of grass, cropped close to the soil by bison, moose-deer and desert horses, began to show up occasionally in the draws. They saw gnawed stumps of stunted conifers. Even the lichen on the rocks was chewed away by the advance herds, and wherever there was sign of vegetable life the ground was covered with cuds and slobbers.

Steadily the patches of grass enlarged, and the land became not quite so rugged. Nights became biting cold. North winds frosted tropically acclimated skins. With sharp stones they skinned the dead bison and horses for robes to wrap themselves. Yet the days continued warm enough, the air still somewhat stifling, the horizons pink with a prismatic pall of crater dust which had been flung thousands of miles into the atmosphere, some pockets of which would float for years far above the earth.

Eighteen days they plodded over the wasteland, gaunt, shrivelled wrecks of mankind, gabbling to themselves, clinging to the rear of the bison herd only because of Kaa, who now was a swaying scarecrow of bones, with only his deep-sunk, burning eyes showing that life flamed stubbornly in him, and that his faith in the good sign had not failed.

On the eighteenth day they reached fresh water. Suddenly they came upon it —a tiny stream crowded with animals where it wound along below a frowning precipice. They croaked from dry throats at the sight. Some fought like fiends to throw themselves from the cliff, but Kaa stayed them while his own head swam with burning thirst.

They went on along the brink of the precipice like living skeletons, and a mile farther on they found a gorge leading down to the green plain. In minutes they had flung themselves in the narrow stream, muddied by the beast multitudes recently arrived, most of which were above them several miles. Among desert horses and bison appearing as if long dead, the twelve drank, and when their thirsts were quenched they rolled in the grass like cats, shrilly crying their joy. Nausea followed from overdrinking, but when the agony was over none had succumbed, for they were gifted with constitutions made to withstand just such aftermaths of privation.

Days and days they rested by the water while their strength came back, while their bones vanished under the filling hide. Then they began to wander northward, hunting as they went, along the stream that meandered its way along grassy valleys and between sheer canyon walls. They found few trees, and no jungle. Great mesas flung their sloping shoulders into the sky on all sides, and queerly domed and truncated buttes of vari-colored strata made of the new land a strange sight to eyes unaccustomed to such scenery.

IN THE face of a huge cliff Kaa found a long, sunken ledge similar to that on which O-Wa had hidden him years before. It was better than the old idea of the barrow-ridge, he decided, and he directed his eleven subjects how to make the parapet of stone, improving this by dividing the ledge into compartments, for the remnant of the tribe was beginning to mate, and the pairs and trios demanded separate barrows. The central fire was preserved as a custom, but Kaa allowed separate fires

for each domicile, which delighted the eleven.

Kaa's love was dead with Chee, but he comprehended the necessity of mating, nor was he dead to the instinct of mating, though none could make him happy as Chee had with her head scratching that was a delight incomparable. Two females were left after the other males had chosen, and these Kaa took into his great barrow. His last choice was not out of generosity to his subject males, but because of indifference brought on by Chee's death.

They dwelt happily in the cliffs, the valley a memory growing vaguer and vaguer, the volcanoes and the flood but a dim, terrible myth to talk about even more vaguely. How they distorted all of it with their superstitious significances. The fire took on personality; they personified the sea; each told a different story. Only Kaa's mind saw the picture clearly, and when his children came into the world he told them. But dim, indeed, was their conception of what they had not experienced, and in but a few generations there would remain only a distorted trace of the destruction of the valley in the land of the sunset.

It was Kaa who at last discovered why the nights were so cold. He and Gor-Ba made a long hike northward. After passing many ice-cold lakes and swift, clear streams, they reached a land cold both day and night, and on the fifth day they saw from a high butte a glittering expanse of ice stretching as far as they could see. Kaa called the ice *pika,* the cloud-sea, until in later years he approached near enough to discover that it was a solid, and that it dissolved only when warmed. He did not conceive of the glacier ever retreating, though under his eyes it was melting. Centuries after him his children would hunt the bison on sunny plains where the ice then lay in layers thousands of feet thick.

On the day that Kaa's first tooth loosened he made the prophecy. The remnant of the tribe had then increased to more than a hundred, all of which worshipped Kaa and the sign of the bison. Gathered around the central fire, the tribe peered out of the gloom of evening that pervaded the ledge, keenly attentive to what the beloved Old Man had to say. Kaa got to his feet, stretching to his full height, unbowed by age, proud of his strength, yet with a dreaming eye.

"From the fire and the bitter water came the people," he said. "Dong-Ga, the good sign, brought the people to the new land. Where Dong-Ga is, there is life. Where Dong-Ga is not, there is death. When Dong-Ga dies, then the people shall die. It is the whispers that have no mouths that tell me. It is the voice of the unknown."

Silently the tribe considered this as the Old Man sank back upon his haunches, and into the flickering flames of the central fire they gazed with eyes that had begun to dream and see.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

THE LOST CONTINENT

By Cutcliffe Hyne

A daring, breathtaking novel about a legend that will never die—the story of beautiful, doomed Atlantis and the men and women who lived for and perished with her.

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The Postman of Otford

By Lord Dunsany

There are some things that human eyes were never meant to see. . . .

THE duties of postman at Otford-under-the-Wold carried Amuel Sleggins farther afield than the village, farther afield than the last house in the lane, right up to the big bare wold and the house where no one went, no one that is but the three grim men that dwelt there and the secretive wife of one, and, once a year when the queer green letter came, Amuel Sleggins the postman.

The green letter always came just as the leaves were turning, addressed to the eldest one of the three grim men, with a wonderful Chinese stamp and the Otford postmark, and Amuel Sleggins carried it up to the house.

He was not afraid to go, for he always took the letter, had done so for seven years, yet whenever summer began to draw to a close, Amuel Sleggins was ill at ease, and if there was a touch of autumn about shivered unduly so that all folk wondered.

And then one day a wind would blow from the East, and the wild geese would appear, having left the sea, flying high and crying strangely, and pass till they were no more than a thin black line in the sky like a magical stick flung up by a doer of magic, twisting and twirling away; and the leaves would turn on the trees and the mists be white on the marshes and the sun set large and red and autumn would step down quietly that night from the wold; and next day the strange green letter would come from China.

His fear of the three grim men and that secretive woman and their lonely, secluded house, or else the cadaverous cold of the dying season, rather braced Amuel when the time was come and he would step out bolder upon the day that he feared than he had perhaps for weeks. He longed on that day for a letter for the last house in the lane, there he would dally and talk awhile and look on church-going faces before his long tramp over the lonely wold to end at the dreaded door of the queer grey house called wold-hut.

When he came to the door of wold-hut he would give the postman's knock as though he came on ordinary rounds to a house of every day, although no path led up to it, although the skins of weasels hung thickly from upper windows.

And scarcely had his postman's knock rung through the dark of the house when the eldest of the three grim men would always run to the door. O, what a face had he. There was more slyness in it than ever his beard could hide. He would put out a gristly hand; and into it Amuel Sleggins would put that letter from China, and rejoice that his duty was done, and would turn and stride away. And the fields lit up before him, but, ominous, eager and low murmuring arose inside of the wold-hut.

For seven years this was so and no harm had come to Sleggins, seven times he had gone to wold-hut and as often come safely away; and then he needs must marry. Perhaps because she was young, perhaps because she was fair or because she had shapely ankles as she came one day through the marshes among the milkmaid flowers shoeless in spring. Less things than these have brought men to their ends and been the nooses with which Fate snared them running. With marriage curiosity entered his house, and one day as they walked with evening through the meadows, one summer evening, she asked him of wold-hut where he only went, and what the folks were like that no one else had seen. All this he told her; and then she asked him of the green letter from China, that came with autumn, and what the letter contained. He read to her all the rules of the Inland Revenue, he told her he did not know, that it was not right that he should know, he lectured her on the sin of inquisitiveness, he quoted Parson, and in the end she said that she must know. They argued concerning this for many days, days of the ending of summer, of shortening evenings, and as they argued

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RONALD CLYNE

autumn grew nearer and nearer and the green letter from China.

And at last he promised that when the green letter came he would take it as usual to the lonely house and then hide somewhere near and creep to the window at nightfall and hear what the grim folk said; perhaps they might read aloud the letter from China. And before he had time to repent of that promise a cold wind came one night and the woods turned golden, the plover went in bands at evening over the marshes, the year had turned, and there came the letter from China. Never before had Amuel felt such misgivings as he went his postman's rounds, never before had he so much feared the day that took him up to the wold and the lonely house, while snug by the fire his wife looked pleasurably forward to curiosity's gratification and hoped to have news ere nightfall that all the gossips of the village would envy. One consolation only had Amuel as he set out with a shiver, there was a letter that day for the last house in the lane. Long did he tarry there to look at their cheery faces, to hear the sound of their laughter,—you did not hear laughter in wold-hut,—and when the last topic had been utterly talked out and no excuse for lingering remained he heaved a heavy sigh and plodded grimly away and so came late to wold-hut.

He gave his postman's knock on the shut oak door, heard it reverberate through the silent house, saw the grim elder man and his gristly hand, gave up the green letter from China, and strode away. There is a clump of trees growing all alone in the wold, desolate, mournful, by day, by night full of ill omen, far off from all other trees as wold-hut from other houses. Near it stands wold-hut. Not today did Amuel stride briskly on with all the new winds of autumn blowing cheerily past him till he saw the village before him and broke into song; but as soon as he was out of sight of the house he turned and stooping behind a fold of the ground ran back to the desolate wood. There he waited watching the evil house, just too far to hear voices. The sun was low already. He chose the window at which he meant to eavesdrop, a little barred one at the back, close to the ground. And then the pigeons came in; for a great distance there was no other wood, so numbers shelter there, though the clump is small and of so evil a look (if they notice that); the first one frightened Amuel, he felt that it might be a spirit escaped from torture in some dim parlour of the house that he watched, his nerves were strained and he feared foolish fears. Then he grew used to them and the sun set then and the aspect of everything altered and he felt strange fears again. Behind him was a hollow in the wold, he watched it darkening; and before him he saw the house through the trunks of the trees. He waited for them to light their lamps so that they could not see, when he would steal up softly and crouch by the little back window. But though every bird was home, though the night grew chilly as tombs, though a star was out, still there shone no yellow light from any window. Amuel waited and shuddered. He did not dare to move till they lit their lamps, they might be watching. The damp and the cold so strangely affected him that autumn evening and the remnants of sunset, the stars and the wold and the whole vault of the sky seemed like a hall that they had prepared for Fear. He began to feel a dread of prodigious things, and still no light shone in the evil house. It grew so dark that he decided to move and make his way to the window in spite of the stillness and though the house was dark. He rose and while standing arrested by pains that cramped his limbs, he heard the door swing open on the far side of the house. He just had time to hide behind the trunk of a pine when the three grim men approached him and the woman hobbled behind. Right to the ominous clump of trees they came as though they loved their blackness, passed through within a yard or two of the postman and squatted down on their haunches in a ring in the hollow behind the trees. They lit a fire in the hollow and laid a kid on the fire and by the light of it Amuel saw brought forth from an untanned pouch the letter that came from China. The elder opened it with his gristly hand and intoning words that Amuel did not know, drew out from it a green powder and sprinkled it on the fire. At once a flame arose and a wonderful savour, the flames rose higher and flickered turning the trees all green; and Amuel saw the gods coming to snuff the savour. While the three grim men prostrated themselves by their fire, and the horrible woman that was the spouse of one, he saw the gods coming gauntly over the wold, beheld the gods of Old England hungrily snuffing the savour, Odin, Balder and Thor, the gods of the ancient people, beheld them eye to eye clear and close in the twilight, and the office of postman fell vacant in Otford-under-the-Wold.

The Novel of the White Powder

By Arthur Machen

Had young Leicester innocently drunk the unholy sacrament of the ancient Witches' Sabbath? Only one man could have answered that question, and as for him. . . .

MY NAME is Helen Leicester; my father, Major-General Wyn Leicester, a distinguished officer of artillery, succumbed five years ago to a complicated liver complaint acquired in the deadly climate of India. A year later my only brother, Francis, came home after an exceptionally brilliant career at the University, and settled down with the resolution of a hermit to master what has been well called the great legend of the law. He was a man who seemed to live in utter indifference to everything that is called pleasure; and though he was handsomer than most men, and could talk as merrily and wittily as if he were a mere vagabond, he avoided society, and shut himself up in a large room at the top of the house to make himself a lawyer. Ten hours a day of hard reading was at first his allotted portion; from the first light in the east to the late afternoon he remained shut up with his books, taking a hasty half-hour's lunch with me as if he grudged the wasting of the moments, and going out for a short walk when it began to grow dusk. I thought that such relentless application must be injurious, and tried to cajole him from the crabbed textbooks, but his ardour seemed to grow rather than diminish, and his daily

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tale of hours increased. I spoke to him seriously, suggesting some occasional relaxation, if it were but an idle afternoon with a harmless novel; but he laughed, and said that he read about feudal tenures when he felt in need of amusement, and scoffed at the notions of theatres, or a month's fresh air. I confessed that he looked well, and seemed not to suffer from his labours, but I knew that such unnatural toil would take revenge at last, and I was not mistaken. A look of anxiety began to lurk about his eyes, and he seemed languid, and at last he avowed that he was no longer in perfect health; he was troubled, he said, with a sensation of dizziness, and awoke now and then of nights from fearful dreams, terrified and cold with icy sweats. "I am taking care of myself," he said, "so you must not trouble; I passed the whole of yesterday afternoon in idleness, leaning back in that comfortable chair you gave me, and scribbling nonsense on a sheet of paper. No, no; I will not overdo my work; I shall be well enough in a week or two depend upon it."

Yet in spite of his assurances I could see that he grew no better, but rather worse; he would enter the drawing-room with a face all miserably wrinkled and despondent, and endeavour to look gaily when my eyes fell on him, and I thought such symptoms of evil omen, and was frightened sometimes at the nervous irritation of his movements, and at glances which I could not decipher. Much against his will, I prevailed on him to have medical advice, and with an ill grace he called in our old doctor.

DR. HABERDEN cheered me after examination of his patient.

"There is nothing really much amiss," he said to me. "No doubt he reads too hard and eats hastily, and then goes back again to his books in too great a hurry, and the natural sequence is some digestive trouble and a little mischief in the nervous system. But I think—I do indeed, Miss Leicester—that we shall be able to set this all right. I have written him a prescription which ought to do great things. So you have no cause for anxiety."

My brother insisted on having the prescription made up by a chemist in the neighbourhood. It was an odd, old-fashioned shop, devoid of the studied coquetry and calculated glitter that make so gay a show on the counters and shelves of the modern apothecary; but Francis liked the old chemist, and believed in the scrupulous purity of his drugs. The medicine was sent in due course, and I saw that my brother took it regularly after lunch and dinner. It was an innocent-looking white powder, of which a little was dissolved in a glass of cold water; I stirred it in, and it seemed to disappear, leaving the water clear and colorless. At first Francis seemed to benefit greatly; the weariness vanished from his face, and he became more cheerful than he had ever been since the time when he left school; he talked gaily of reforming himself, and avowed to me that he had wasted his time.

"I have given too many hours to law," he said, laughing; "I think you have saved me in the nick of time. Come, I shall be Lord Chancellor yet, but I must not forget life. You and I will have a holiday together before long; we will go to Paris and enjoy ourselves, and keep away from the Bibliothèque Nationale."

I confessed myself delighted with the prospect.

"When shall we go?" I said. "I can start the day after to-morrow if you like."

"Ah! that is perhaps a little too soon; after all, I do not know London yet, and I suppose a man ought to give the pleasures of his own country the first choice. But we will go off together in a week or two, so try and furbish up your French. I only know law French myself, and I am afraid that wouldn't do."

WE WERE just finishing dinner, and he quaffed off his medicine with a parade of carousal as if it had been wine from some choicest bin.

"Has it any particular taste?" I said.

"No; I should not know I was not drinking water," and he got up from his chair and began to pace up and down the room as if he were undecided as to what he should do next.

"Shall we have coffee in the drawing-room?" I said; "or would you like to smoke?"

"No, I think I will take a turn; it seems a pleasant evening. Look at the afterglow; why, it is as if a great city were burning in flames, and down there between the dark houses it is raining blood fast. Yes, I will go out; I may be in soon, but I shall take my key; so good-night, dear, if I don't see you again."

The door slammed behind him, and I saw him walk lightly down the street, swinging his malacca cane, and I felt grateful to Dr. Haberden for such an improvement.

I BELIEVE my brother came home very late that night, but he was in a merry mood the next morning.

"I walked on without thinking where I was going," he said, "enjoying the freshness of the air, and livened by the crowds as I reached more frequented quarters. And then I met an old college friend, Orford, in the press of the pavement, and then—well, we enjoyed ourselves. I have felt what it is to be young and a man; I find I have blood in my veins, as other men have. I made an appointment with Orford for to-night; there will be a little party of us at the restaurant. Yes; I shall enjoy myself for a week or two, and hear the chimes at midnight, and then we will go for our little trip together."

Such was the transmutation of my brother's character that in a few days he became a lover of pleasure, a careless and merry idler of western pavements, a hunter out of snug restaurants, and a fine critic of fantastic dancing; he grew fat before my eyes, and said no more of Paris, for he had clearly found his paradise in London. I rejoiced, and yet wondered a little; for there was, I thought, something in his gaiety that indefinitely displeased me, though I could not have defined my feeling. But by degrees there came a change; he returned still in the cold hours of the morning, but I heard no more about his pleasures, and one morning as we sat at breakfast together I looked suddenly into his eyes and saw a stranger before me.

"Oh, Francis!" I cried. "Oh, Francis, Francis, what have you done?" and rending sobs cut the words short. I went weeping out of the room; for though I knew nothing, yet I knew all, and by some odd play of thought I remembered the evening when he first went abroad, and the picture of the sunset sky glowed before me; the clouds like a city in burning flames, and the rain of blood. Yet I did battle with such thoughts, resolving that perhaps, after all, no great harm had been done, and in the evening at dinner I resolved to press him to fix a day for our holiday in Paris. We had talked easily enough, and my brother had just taken his medicine, which he continued all the while. I was about to begin my topic when the words forming in my mind vanished, and I wondered for a second what icy and intolerable weight oppressed my heart and suffocated me as with the unutterable horror of the coffin-lid nailed down on the living.

We had dined without candles; the room had slowly grown from twilight to gloom, and the walls and corners were indistinct in the shadow. But from where I sat I looked out into the street; and as I thought of what I would say to Francis, the sky began to flush and shine, as it had done on a well-remembered evening, and in the gap between two dark masses that were houses an awful pageantry of flame appeared—lurid whorls of writhed cloud, and utter depths burning, grey masses like the fume blown from a smoking city, and an evil glory blazing far above shot with tongues of more ardent fire, and below as if there were a deep pool of blood. I looked down to where my brother sat facing me, and the words were shaped on my lips, when I saw his hand resting on the table. Between the thumb and forefinger of the closed hand there was a mark, a small patch about the size of a sixpence, and somewhat of the colour of a bad bruise. Yet, by some sense I cannot define, I knew that what I saw was no bruise at all; oh! if human flesh could burn with flame, and if flame could be black as pitch, such was that before me. Without thought or fashioning of words grey horror shaped within me at the sight, and in an inner cell it was known to be a brand. For the moment the stained sky became dark as midnight, and when the light returned to me I was alone in the silent room, and soon after I heard my brother go out.

LATE as it was, I put on my hat and went to Dr. Haberden, and in his great consulting room, ill lighted by a candle which the doctor brought in with him, with stammering lips, and a voice that would break in spite of my resolve, I told him all, from the day on which my brother began to take the medicine down to the dreadful thing I had seen scarcely half an hour before.

When I had done, the doctor looked at me for a minute with an expression of great pity on his face.

"My dear Miss Leicester," he said, "you have evidently been anxious about your brother; you have been worrying over him, I am sure. Come, now, is it not so?"

"I have certainly been anxious," I said. "For the last week or two I have not felt at ease."

"Quite so; you know, of course, what a queer thing the brain is?"

"I understand what you mean; but I was not deceived. I saw what I have told you with my own eyes."

"Yes, yes, of course. But your eyes had been staring at that very curious sunset

we had tonight. That is the only explanation. You will see it in the proper light to-morrow, I am sure. But, remember, I am always ready to give any help that is in my power; do not scruple to come to me, or to send for me if you are in any distress."

I went away but little comforted, all confusion and terror and sorrow, not knowing where to turn. When my brother and I met the next day, I looked quickly at him, and noticed, with a sickening at heart, that the right hand, the hand on which I had clearly seen the patch as of a black fire, was wrapped up with a handkerchief.

"What is the matter with your hand, Francis?" I said in a steady voice.

"Nothing of consequence. I cut a finger last night, and it bled rather awkwardly. So I did it up roughly to the best of my ability."

"I will do it neatly for you, if you like."

"No, thank you, dear; this will answer very well. Suppose we have breakfast; I am quite hungry."

We sat down and I watched him. He scarcely ate or drank at all, but tossed his meat to the dog when he thought my eyes were turned away; there was a look in his eyes that I had never yet seen, and the thought flashed across my mind that it was a look that was scarcely human. I was firmly convinced that awful and incredible as was the thing I had seen the night before, yet it was no illusion, no glamour of bewildered sense, and in the course of the evening I went again to the doctor's house.

He shook his head with an air puzzled and incredulous, and seemed to reflect for a few minutes.

"And you say he still keeps up the medicine? But why? As I understand, all the symptoms he complained of have disappeared long ago; why should he go on taking the stuff when he is quite well? And by the by, where did he get it made up? At Sayce's? I never send any one there; the old man is getting careless. Suppose you come with me to the chemist's; I should like to have some talk with him."

WE WALKED together to the shop; old Sayce knew Dr. Haberden, and was quite ready to give any information.

"You have been sending that in to Mr. Leicester for some weeks, I think, on my prescription," said the doctor, giving the old man a pencilled scrap of paper.

The chemist put on his great spectacles with trembling uncertainty, and held up the paper with a shaking hand.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I have very little of it left; it is rather an uncommon drug, and I have had it in stock some time. I must get in some more, if Mr. Leicester goes on with it."

"Kindly let me have a look at the stuff," said Haberden, and the chemist gave him a glass bottle. He took out the stopper and smelt the contents, and looked strangely at the old man.

"Where did you get this?" he said, "and what is it? For one thing, Mr. Sayce, it is not what I prescribed. Yes, yes, I see the label is right enough, but I tell you this is not the drug."

"I have had it a long time," said the old man in feeble terror; "I got it from Burbage's in the usual way. It is not prescribed often, and I have had it on the shelf for some years. You see there is very little left."

"You had better give it to me," said Haberden. "I am afraid something wrong has happened."

We went out of the shop in silence, the doctor carrying the bottle neatly wrapped in paper under his arm.

"Dr. Haberden," I said, when we had walked a little way—"Dr. Haberden."

"Yes," he said, looking at me gloomily enough.

"I should like you to tell me what my brother has been taking twice a day for the last month or so."

"Frankly, Miss Leicester, I don't know. We will speak of this when we get to my house."

We walked on quickly without another word till we reached Dr. Haberden's. He asked me to sit down, and began pacing up and down the room, his face clouded over, as I could see, with no common fears.

"Well," he said at length, "this is all very strange; it is only natural that you should feel alarmed, and I must confess that my mind is far from easy. We will put aside, if you please, what you told me last night and this morning, but the fact remains that for the last few weeks Mr. Leicester has been impregnating his system with a drug which is completely unknown to me. I tell you, it is not what I ordered; and what the stuff in the bottle really is remains to be seen."

He undid the wrapper, and cautiously tilted a few grains of the white powder on to a piece of paper, and peered curiously at it.

"Yes," he said, "it is like the sulphate of quinine, as you say; it is flaky. But smell it."

He held the bottle to me, and I bent over it. It was a strange, sickly smell, vaporous and overpowering like some strong anaesthetic.

"I shall have it analysed," said Haberden; "I have a friend who has devoted his whole life to chemistry as a science. Then we shall have something to go upon. No, no; say no more about the other matter; I cannot listen to that; and take my advice and think no more about it yourself."

That evening my brother did not go out as usual after dinner.

"I have had my fling," he said with a queer laugh, "and I must go back to my old ways. A little law will be quite a relaxation after so sharp a dose of pleasure," and he grinned to himself, and soon after went up to his room. His hand was still all bandaged.

Dr. Haberden called a few days later.

"I have no special news to give you," he said. "Chambers is out of town, so I know no more about that stuff than you do. But I should like to see Mr. Leicester, if he is in."

"He is in his room," I said; "I will tell him you are here."

"No, no, I will go up to him; we will have a little quiet talk together. I dare say that we have made a good deal of fuss about a very little; for, after all, whatever the powder may be, it seems to have done him good."

The doctor went upstairs, and standing in the hall I heard his knock, and the opening and shutting of the door; and then I waited in the silent house for an hour, and the stillness grew more and more intense as the hands of the clock crept round. Then there sounded from above the noise of a door shut sharply, and the doctor was coming down the stairs. His footsteps crossed the hall, and there was a pause at the door; I drew a long, sick breath with difficulty, and saw my face white in a little mirror, and he came in and stood at the door. There was an unutterable horror shining in his eyes; he steadied himself by holding the back of a chair with one hand, his lower lip trembled like a horse's, and he gulped and stammered unintelligible sounds before he spoke.

"I have seen that man," he began in a dry whisper. "I have been sitting in his presence for the last hour. My God! And I am alive and in my senses! I, who have dealt with death all my life, and have dabbled with the melting ruins of the earthly tabernacle. But not this, oh! not this," and he covered his face with his hands as if to shut out the sight of something before him.

"Do not send for me again, Miss Leicester," he said with more composure. "I can do nothing in this house. Good-bye."

As I watched him totter down the steps, and along the pavement towards his house, it seemed to me that he had aged by ten years since the morning.

MY BROTHER remained in his room. He called out to me in a voice I hardly recognized that he was very busy, and would like his meals brought to his door and left there, and I gave the order to the servants. From that day it seemed as if the arbitrary conception we call time had been annihilated for me; I lived in an ever-present sense of horror, going through the routine of the house mechanically, and only speaking a few necessary words to the servants. Now and then I went out and paced the streets for an hour or two and came home again; but whether I were without or within, my spirit delayed before the closed door of the upper room, and, shuddering, waited for it to open. I have said that I scarcely reckoned time; but I suppose it must have been a fortnight after Dr. Haberden's visit that I came home from my stroll a little refreshed and lightened. The air was sweet and pleasant, and the hazy form of green leaves, floating cloud-like in the square, and the smell of blossoms, had charmed my senses, and I felt happier and walked more briskly. As I delayed a moment at the verge of the pavement, waiting for a van to pass by before crossing over to the house, I happened to look up at the windows, and instantly there was the rush and swirl of deep cold waters in my ears, my heart leapt up and fell down, down as into a deep hollow, and I was amazed with a dread and terror without form or shape. I stretched out a hand blindly through the folds of thick darkness, from the black and shadowy valley, and held myself from falling, while the stones beneath my feet rocked and swayed and tilted, and the sense of solid things seemed to sink away from under me. I had glanced up at the window of my brother's study, and at that moment the blind was drawn aside, and something that had life stared out into the world. Nay, I cannot say I saw a face or any human likeness; a living thing, two eyes of burning flame glared at me, and

they were in the midst of something as formless as my fear, the symbol and presence of all evil and all hideous corruption. I stood shuddering and quaking as with the grip of ague, sick with unspeakable agonies of fear and loathing, and for five minutes I could not summon force or motion to my limbs. When I was within the door, I ran up the stairs to my brother's room and knocked.

"Francis, Francis," I cried, "for Heaven's sake, answer me. What is the horrible thing in your room? Cast it out, Francis; cast it from you."

I heard a noise as of feet shuffling slowly and awkwardly, and a choking, gurgling sound, as if some one was struggling to find utterance, and then the noise of a voice, broken and stifled, and words that I could scarcely understand.

"There is nothing here," the voice said. "Pray do not disturb me. I am not very well today."

I turned away, horrified, and yet helpless. I could do nothing, and I wondered why Francis had lied to me, for I had seen the appearance beyond the glass too plainly to be deceived, though it was but the sight of a moment. And I sat still, conscious that there had been something else, something I had seen in the first flash of terror, before those burning eyes had looked at me. Suddenly I remembered; as I lifted my face the blind was being drawn back, and I had had an instant's glance of the thing that was moving it, and in my recollection I knew that a hideous image was engraved forever on my brain. It was not a hand; there were no fingers that held the blind, but a black stump pushed it aside, the mouldering outline and the clumsy movement as of a beast's paw had glowed into my senses before the darkling waves of terror had overwhelmed me as I went down quick into the pit. My mind was aghast at the thought of this, and of the awful presence that dwelt with my brother in his room; I went to his door and cried to him again, but no answer came. That night one of the servants came up to me and told me in a whisper that for three days food had been regularly placed at the door and left untouched; the maid had knocked but had received no answer; she had heard the noise of shuffling feet that I had noticed. Day after day went by, and still my brother's meals were brought to his door and left untouched; and though I knocked and called again and again, I could get no answer. The servants began to talk to me; it appeared they were as alarmed as I; the cook said that when my brother first shut himself up in his room she used to hear him come out at night and go about the house; and once, she said, the hall door had opened and closed again, but for several nights she had heard no sound. The climax came at last; it was in the dusk of the evening, and I was sitting in the darkening dreary room when a terrible shriek jarred and rang harshly out of the silence, and I heard a frightened scurry of feet dashing down the stairs. I waited, and the servant-maid staggered into the room and faced me, white and trembling.

"Oh, Miss Helen!" she whispered; "oh! for the Lord's sake, Miss Helen, what has happened? Look at my hand, miss; look at that hand!"

I drew her to the window, and saw there was a black wet stain upon her hand.

"I do not understand you," I said. "Will you explain to me?"

"I was doing your room just now," she began. "I was turning down the bedclothes, and all of a sudden there was something fell upon my hand, wet, and I looked up, and the ceiling was black and dripping on me."

I looked hard at her and bit my lip.

"Come with me," I said. "Bring your candle with you."

The room I slept in was beneath my brother's, and as I went in I felt I was trembling. I looked up at the ceiling, and saw a patch, all black and wet, and a dew of black drops upon it, and a pool of horrible liquor soaking into the white bedclothes.

I ran upstairs and knocked loudly.

"Oh, Francis, Francis, my dear brother," I cried, "what has happened to you?"

And I listened. There was a sound of choking, and a noise like water bubbling and regurgitating, but nothing else, and I called louder, but no answer came.

In spite of what Dr. Haberden had said, I went to him; with tears streaming down my cheeks I told him all that had happened, and he listened to me with a face set hard and grim.

"For your father's sake," he said at last, "I will go with you, though I can do nothing."

We went out together; the streets were dark and silent, and heavy with heat and a drought of many weeks. I saw the doctor's face white under the gas-lamps, and when we reached the house his hand was shaking.

We did not hesitate, but went upstairs

directly. I held the lamp, and he called out in a loud, determined voice—

"Mr. Leicester, do you hear me? I insist on seeing you. Answer me at once."

There was no answer, but we both heard that choking noise I have mentioned.

"Mr. Leicester, I am waiting for you. Open the door this instant, or I shall break it down." And he called a third time in a voice that rang and echoed from the walls—

"Mr. Leicester! For the last time I order you to open the door."

"Ah!" he said, after a pause of heavy silence, "we are wasting time here. Will you be so kind as to get me a poker, or something of the kind?"

I ran into a little room at the back where odd articles were kept, and found a heavy adze-like tool that I thought might serve the doctor's purpose.

"Very good," he said, "that will do, I dare say. I give you notice, Mr. Leicester," he cried loudly at the keyhole, "that I am now about to break into your room."

Then I heard the wrench of the adze, and the wood-work split and cracked under it; with a loud crash the door suddenly burst open, and for a moment we started back aghast at a fearful screaming cry, no human voice, but as the roar of a monster, that burst forth inarticulate and struck at us out of the darkness.

"Hold the lamp," said the doctor, and we went in and glanced quickly around the room.

"There it is," said Dr. Haberden, drawing a quick breath; "look, in that corner."

I looked, and a pang of horror seized my heart as with a white-hot iron. There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up what might have been an arm. The doctor took a step forward, raised the iron bar and struck at the burning points; he drove in the weapon, and struck again and again in the fury of loathing.

A WEEK or two later, when I had recovered to some extent from the terrible shock, Dr. Haberden came to see me.

"I have sold my practice," he began, "and tomorrow I am sailing on a long voyage. I do not know whether I shall ever return to England; in all probability I shall buy a little land in California, and settle there for the remainder of my life. I have brought you this packet, which you may open and read when you feel able to do so. It contains the report of Dr. Chambers on what I submitted to him. Goodbye, Miss Leicester, good-bye."

When he was gone I opened the envelope; I could not wait, and proceeded to read the papers within. Here is the manuscript, and if you will allow me, I will read you the astounding story it contains.

"My dear Haberden," the letter began, "I have delayed inexcusably in answering your questions as to the white substance you sent me. To tell you the truth, I have hesitated for some time as to what course I should adopt, for there is a bigotry and orthodox standard in physical science as in theology, and I knew that if I told you the truth I should offend rooted prejudices which I once held dear myself. However, I have determined to be plain with you, and first I must enter into a short personal explanation.

"You have known me, Haberden, for many years as a scientific man; you and I have often talked of our profession together, and discussed the hopeless gulf that opens before the feet of those who think to attain to truth by any means whatsoever except the beaten way of experiment and observation in the sphere of material things. I remember the scorn with which you have spoken to me of men of science who had dabbled a little in the unseen, and have timidly hinted that perhaps the senses are not, after all, the eternal, impenetrable bounds of all knowledge, the everlasting walls beyond which no human being has ever passed. We have laughed together heartily, and I think justly, at the 'occult' follies of the day, disguised under various names—the mesmerisms, spiritualisms, materializations, theosophies, all the rabble rout of imposture, with their machinery of poor tricks and feeble conjuring, the true back-parlour of shabby London streets. Yet, in spite of what I have said, I must confess to you that I am no materialist, taking the word of course in its usual signification. It is now many years since I have convinced myself, a sceptic, remember—that the old ironbound theory is utterly and entirely false. Perhaps this confession will not wound you so sharply as it would have done twenty years ago; for I think you cannot have failed to notice that for some time hypotheses have been advanced by

men of pure science which are nothing less than transcendental, and I suspect that most modern chemists and biologists of repute would not hesitate to subscribe the *dictum* of the old Schoolman, *Omnia exeunt in mysterium,* which means, I take it, that every branch of human knowledge if traced up to its source and final principles vanishes into mystery. I need not trouble you now with a detailed account of the painful steps which led me to my conclusions; a few simple experiments suggested a doubt as to my then standpoint, and a train of thought that rose from circumstances comparatively trifling brought me far; my old conception of the universe has been swept away, and I stand in a world that seems as strange and awful to me as the endless waves of the ocean seen for the first time, shining, from a peak in Darien. Now I know that the walls of sense that seemed so impenetrable, that seemed to loom up above the heavens and to be founded below the depths, and to shut us in for evermore, are no such everlasting impassable barriers as we fancied, but thinnest and most airy veils that melt away before the seeker, and dissolve as the early mist of the morning about the brooks. I know that you never adopted the extreme materialistic position; you did not go about trying to prove a universal negative, for your logical sense withheld you from that crowning absurdity; but I am sure that you will find all that I am saying strange and repellent to your habits of thought. Yet, Haberden, what I tell you is the truth, nay, to adopt our common language, the sole and scientific truth, verified by experience; and the universe is verily more splendid and more awful than we used to dream. The whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter; and man, and the sun and the other stars, and the flower of the grass, and the crystal in the test-tube, are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working.

"YOU WILL perhaps wonder, Haberden, whence all this tends; but I think a little thought will make it clear. You will understand that from such a standpoint the whole view of things is changed, and what we thought incredible and absurd may be possible enough. In short, we must look at legend and belief with other eyes, and be prepared to accept tales that had become mere fables. Indeed this is no such great demand. After all, modern science will concede as much, in a hypocritical manner; you must not, it is true, believe in witchcraft, but you may credit hypnotism; ghosts are out of date, but there is a good deal to be said for the theory of telepathy. Give superstition a Greek name, and believe in it, should almost be a proverb.

"So much for my personal explanation. You sent me, Haberden, a phial, stoppered and sealed, containing a small quantity of flaky white powder, obtained from a chemist who has been dispensing it to one of your patients. I am not surprised to hear that this powder refused to yield any results to your analysis. It is a substance which was known to a few many hundred years ago, but which I never expected to have submitted to me from the shop of a modern apothecary. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the man's tale; he no doubt got, as he says, the rather uncommon salt you prescribed from the wholesale chemist's; and it has probably remained on his shelf for twenty years, or perhaps longer. Here what we call chance and coincidence begin to work; during all these years the salt in the bottle was exposed to certain recurring variations of temperature, variations probably ranging from 40° to 80°. And, as it happens, such changes, recurring year after year at irregular intervals, and with varying degrees of intensity and duration, have constituted a process, and a process so complicated and so delicate, that I question whether modern scientific apparatus directed with the utmost precision could produce the same result. The white powder you sent me is something very different from the drug you prescribed; it is the powder from which the wine of the Sabbath, the *Vinum Sabbati,* was prepared. No doubt you have read of the Witches' Sabbath, and have laughed at the tales which terrified our ancestors; the black cats, and the broomsticks, and dooms pronounced against some old woman's cow. Since I have known the truth I have often reflected that it is on the whole a happy thing that such burlesque as this is believed, for it serves to conceal much that it is better should not be known generally. However, if you care to read the appendix to Payne Knight's monograph, you will find that the true Sabbath was something very different, though the writer has very nicely refrained from printing all he knew. The secrets of the true Sabbath were the secrets of remote times surviving into the Middle Ages, secrets of an evil science which existed

long before Aryan man entered Europe. Men and women, seduced from their homes on specious pretences, were met by beings well qualified to assume, as they did assume, the part of devils, and taken by their guides to some desolate and lonely place, known to the initiate by long tradition, and unknown to all else. Perhaps it was a cave in some bare and windswept hill, perhaps some inmost recess of a great forest, and there the Sabbath was held. There, in the blackest hour of night, the *Vinum Sabbati* was prepared, and this evil graal was poured forth and offered to the neophytes, and they partook of an infernal sacrament; *sumentes calicem principis inferorum,* as an old author well expresses it. And suddenly, each one that had drunk found himself attended by a companion, a shape of glamour and unearthly allurement, beckoning him apart, to share in joys more exquisite, more piercing than the thrill of any dream, to the consummation of the marriage of the Sabbath. It is hard to write of such things as these, and chiefly because that shape that allured with loveliness was no hallucination, but, awful as it is to express, the man himself. By the power of that Sabbath wine, a few grains of white powder thrown into a glass of water, the house of life was riven asunder and the human trinity dissolved, and the worm which never dies, that which lies sleeping within us all, was made tangible and an external thing, and clothed with a garment of flesh. And then, in the hour of midnight, the primal fall was repeated and re-presented, and the awful thing veiled in the mythos of the Tree in the Garden was done anew. Such was the *nuptiae Sabbati.*

"I prefer to say no more; you, Haberden, know as well as I do that the most trivial laws of life are not to be broken with impunity; and for so terrible an act as this, in which the very inmost place of the temple was broken open and defiled, a terrible vengeance followed. What began with corruption ended also with corruption."

Underneath is the following in Dr. Haberden's writing:—

"The whole of the above is unfortunately strictly and entirely true. Your brother confessed all to me on that morning when I saw him in his room. My attention was first attracted to the bandaged hand, and I forced him to show it to me. What I saw made me, a medical man of many years' standing, grow sick with loathing, and the story I was forced to listen to was infinitely more frightful than I could have believed possible. It has tempted me to doubt the Eternal Goodness which can permit nature to offer such hideous possibilities; and if you had not with your own eyes seen the end, I should have said to you—disbelieve it all. I have not, I think, many more weeks to live, but you are young, and may forget all this.

"Joseph Haberden, M.D."

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(Continued from page 6)

This sold through a large ten-cent store chain.

A book for boys preceded "Brown Horde" as practise on the cave man theme. This was titled "The Dawn Boy" and was published by Penn in 1932, and later in France by M. Louis Postiff before the war. It probably sold to tourists at the prehistoric caves in France where it was set.

I've sold a total of eight books and have written more that were published under other names. I was the "ghost" in these instances. After I became a full-time writer and writing counselor, I discovered one of the chief rubs in a writing career where one does not have any other finances: I had to write for quick money and money in advance when obtainable in order to make a living. This meant no more book gambles for me. I hadn't the time to advance. On the other hand, if I went into another line of work I'd never get any writing done at all. I live a compromise as most men must do in this world. I make twice the living of the average man by working at something I love and am adapted to, namely, writing—for the other fellow.

Some writers have no ideals. I am often forced to neglect my ideals in mercenary employment of my talents. But I always try to work for results even when the means suffer. My message for the world is that of many thinking writers and thinking engineers of today.

1. Government ownership of all basic industries necessary to reasonably comfortable living.

2. Private enterprise in all business and professions not absolutely necessary to human comfort.

3. Civil service politics from the township to the national capitol. Abolition of politics as a profession, and cross-check among states as to honesty of governments and efficiency of management.

4. Large expenditures by science foundations for the success of space flight to other planets.

Our next adventure frontier, and economic frontier, will be found somewhere on the other planets. We may find valuable metals on the moon, but the logical colonial frontier seems to be Venus.

This war is developing rocket propulsion and artificial oxygen tremendously. I expect to live to see the moon circumnavigated by the hero of tomorrow's adventure scene. He will probably fly out of earth's atmosphere by gasoline motor, then fire a series of rockets that will plunge him around the moon at terrific speed, then back to earth, landing with gasoline motor again. I say "he." The nervy boys of today, surviving this war, will probably flock to volunteer as a crew. I know I would if young enough.

I doubt if I'll ever write another novel like "Brown Horde" or "Inland Deep" or "The Dawn Boy." Like H. G. Wells (in this at any rate) the writing of fantasy and adventure fiction seems to be a phase of youth. Wells outgrew it with "Mr. Britling Sees It Through." If there is ever a next novel for me (I can do one if the movies will give me a few thousand for "Brown Horde" rights), that novel will be a social novel, rooted in the soil of North Dakota where I spent the impressionable years of my life. The plot is all in mind. I have a dozen books that yearn to be written, but there's an adopted family to consider, and I cannot gamble even six months of my time on a novel.

Yours for a bigger and better F. F. M.

Sincerely yours,

RICHARD TOOKER.

P. O. Box 148,
PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

"GREATEST ADVENTURE" A CLASSIC

After failing to report last issue—a fact which I am duly regretful of—I shall attempt to redeem myself by letting loose with both barrels, giving you a half-year report.

First, the March Issue. Fine, symbolic cover. Lawrence is rapidly developing a talent that places him on an even footing with the best. (i.e. Paul, Finlay, Leydenfrost.) This was your best cover since Finlay's fine interpretation of "Ark of Fire." Lawrence was good throughout the book, particularly on the two frontpieces. His picture of the old man, too, was superb. However, in one drawing for the second story, he seemed needlessly in a hurry—I don't recall which one it was—but the others more than made up for it, so I've no reason to complain.

Chesterton's "The Man Who Was Thursday" is the best bit of work since—h'm-m—since the issue immediately preceding. It was a great story. However, the competition that you gave it in previous issues dims its greatness. I consider it a minor classic, rating 4.0, with 3.5 being very good, and 4.2 being classic. There was an undercurrent of subtle humor behind every phrase in the story that had me utterly fascinated. Then of course, G.K.C.'s ending, with all its vast sweep was as unsuspected as it was classical.

You should have called that March issue the "British Number"—or something of the like. Hodgson, the other author, is as British as Chesterton. If these two stories—"Thursday", and "The Ghost Pirates", are an example of British fantasy, then by all means let's have more! The ghost story also rates 4.0. The best thing about this yarn was the way the author led up to numerous little climaxes—each one slightly larger than the one before it—until the Final Horror was reached. Very good (and scary!) writing. I await more of Hodgson's work eagerly.

That's that for March; it was a darn good issue. However, I've never yet seen a copy of F.F.M that wasn't—this one, as fine as it was, as a matter of fact, was slightly below your fine average. That again, is because of the high standards you've set with such true classics as "Ark of Fire", "Creep, Shadow!", "The Metal Monster", "Three Go Back", "The Afterglow"—(ah, there was a fitting clincher to a fine trilogy), "Elixir of Hate", etc. etc. Every time I realize the fact that I've been hanging around as an ardent reader of fantasy

for almost five years now—and have somehow passed F.F.M by until comparatively recently, I cuss myself. The process of picking up back issues via the second hand route is so-o slow. . . . .

I suppose the chief reason that you hang back from changing the name of F.F.M. is that it is that name which newsstand scanners become accustomed to, and you might lose some circulation if you were to change the name. As someone suggested, the name of *Famous Fantastic Classics* wouldn't be much different from the current one, at all. And it sounds a thousand per cent finer. What say, ed? The large majority of readers seem to be in favor of a change.

June's cover was only fair. Lawrence left symbolism, and left the very fine black background, threw in a b.e.m. and didn't do too well. His inside pix were very fine—particularly the frontpiece and the Warm Valley. Fox has done quite well in his initial try in *Famous*. Yup, I liked his picture quite a bit.

Taine's "The Greatest Adventure" was a classic right from the beginning. No human villain—man, this *is* something new! The story was slowly built up upon a good foundation of sane and sensible characters with, as far as a first reading could show me, no clumsy passages. It gets 4.2 in my newly devised rating system. The idea that J.T. presented in this tale intrigues me. If and when an artificial cell—alive, and capable of propagating—is created, it is bound to be infinitely different from nature's own version. The genes, to be alive, and capable of reproduction—it must have genes, you know—in all probability would be entirely different from any of nature's. The monstrosities which would result, after hundreds of millions of years of evolution, in my opinion, wouldn't even remotely resemble any life that has ever existed on earth. You might say that environment would tend to make it similar—yet, in my op., again—the initial cell will be so *alien* that life on a parallel with our own would be out of the question. However, I suppose this topic is open for debate. Taine probably was as right as I in assuming minor differences in his animals. (He did have a vastly different type of plant, though.) I'm ready to defend my views before anybody who'd care to argue with me.

"The Wendigo" by Blackwood was a minor classic (4.0). And so, in the last two months—oops, two issues—*six* months—every yarn has been at least in that category. Not bad. Now to The W itself. Blackwood built up an atmosphere of suspense right from the first few pages. More of his work would be welcome.

About the mag. reprints which have been causing so much controversy of late. If your company permits, I'd suggest that you take a story regardless of where it came from. If it's a classic, we don't care whether it was a book, appeared in an old *All-Story*—or never was printed at all. We just want to read it!

MILT LESSER,
THE HAPPY GENIUS.

2302 AVENUE O,
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

ABOUT TAINE

You really ought to know better than to give encouragement to a guy like me. Since you printed my first letter, you'll probably never get rid of me. But here goes.

I might as well get rid of gripes right here at the beginning. First: there's the matter of the title. Somebody seems awfully stubborn about changing it, but I can be just as stubborn. Maybe if I write long enough, it will have some effect. Do you think it would do any good if every reader wrote in and complained about it? The condemnation seems to be universal, so, for heaven's sake, let's get rid of that corny moniker!

Next is the matter of reprints. Either you're dodging the issue, or you don't get the point of the complaints. Personally, I have no squawk about the quality of the stories, but it's the fact that such a policy of no magazine reprints robs us of the great stories which appeared in the old *Argosy* and *All-Story Weekly*.

I think I'll include in my crusading the matter of monthly issues and trimmed edges. The monthly business is in the laps of the gods, though a little action might speed things along. Out of all the divisions of pulp fiction, why does fantasy get kicked around so much when it's actually a definite division of literature? Oh, the injustice of it all! Trimmed edges, as has been stated before, is for collectors, but after all, isn't F.F.M. itself a collector's item? Please!

After all that wandering, I'm finally getting to the June issue of . . . now what's the name of that mag?

The cover didn't compare with the one for the March issue. I can't figure why Lawrence put those abortive wings on the monster on the cover. I was under the impression that all creatures with internal skeletons had four, if only in rudimentary form, limbs, but never more.

The airplane on the cover has brought up something that has been a sore spot and a point of amazement to me. Why is it that fantasy artists can't draw decent airplanes? In all the illustrations I've seen, there has been only one good airplane. Even Paul couldn't—or didn't, draw good ones. That monstrosity on the cover could never get off the ground, and I know darn well that Lawrence can do better. Airplanes aren't hard to draw. Really, even I can draw a pretty nice one.

But now we come to the interior illustrations. Ahhhh. . . . I don't know whether Lawrence gets better each issue or whether he's growing on me. It's probably both, but I like him more each time I see him. I'd much rather have seen Bok on "The Wendigo" than Fox. That's the sort of thing that Bok can really go to town on. Give him a chance.

"The Greatest Adventure". Hotcha! Taine again. That fellow can really write, and the more I read of him, the better I like him. Although I liked the story itself, I'm a bit dubious of the science therein.

The accelerated growth of the spores under

the influence of cold can be explained by a curious sort of metabolism, but such a tremendous amount of growth would take a lot of available nutrients. Every ounce of plant growth takes an equivalent amount of raw materials, and those raw materials certainly could not be obtained from the bare ice that covers Anartica. So where is that business of the plants covering Anartica? For shame, Mr. Taine, destroying all that oil when the world is running out of oil!

The second scientific point that has me puzzled is the matter of the blowholes. I'll admit that it may be possible for waves in the underground reservoir to compress the natural gasses till they became red hot, but when air was sucked into the reservoirs and compressed with the gasses, what's to keep the whole thing from blowing up right then and there? I'd really like to know if I am right about that.

"The Wendigo" proves that Blackwood, like Hodgson, is a master of atmosphere. I have only one criticism of the story. Blackwood knew the character of the educated type of person, but he didn't know that of the cruder person, as evinced by the dialogue of Defago. The conversation is strained and for that reason, the story suffers. I liked the way he used the "feet" of the Wendigo to build up climaxes. By all means, let's have more Blackwood, including "The Willows". Another one you might print is "The Valley of the Beasts", another finely written tale of the outdoors.

The blurb for the next story indicates that it's another caveman story. Don't have too many of that type. Personally, I'm waiting for "The Night Land," and I hope you have it even if you have to run it in two or three installments. Oh yes, don't forget Machen!

I'll end with the eternal request. We *want* a *monthly, now! ! !*

If this letter has seemed exceedingly critical and full of gripes, just remember that it's a healthy sign when readers take so much interest in a magazine, for I love F.F.M. and all its stories.

STANLEY SKIRVIN.

STAR ROUTE,
LICKING PIKE,
NEWPORT, KENTUCKY.

ON F.F.M.'S FIFTH BIRTHDAY

I have not written to express any opinion of your magazine since its inception in 1939, and feel that I would now like to air some of my views concerning *Famous Fantastic Mysteries,* as well as indicate one or two personal preferences that I would like to see reprinted.

The current issue, with John Taine's "The Greatest Adventure" and Algernon Blackwood's "The Wendigo", was the most palatable copy that the new management has thus far issued. You simply can't go wrong with John Taine, who is more a modern Jules Verne than any other fantasy writer, and, by all means, reprint "The Gold Tooth", "The Purple Sapphire", "Quayle's Invention" (his longest and best, in my opinion) and "Green Fires". As for Blackwood, I enjoyed his current offering greatly, and would very much like to see "The Willows" and others reprinted. I believe I read "The Willows" some ten or twelve years ago, but I do not recall clearly: all I can remember is that it was by Blackwood and that it made splendid reading.

The editorial prejudice which forbids the continuance of reprinting fantasy that originally appeared in magazines is highly regrettable. Remember that it was Bob Davis, the greatest pulp editor ever, who discovered A. Merritt, George Allan England, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and similar writers who are now awefully referred to as "Titans of Fantasy".... rightfully so, too. In possessing copyrights to such gems of fantastic literature, and not availing yourself of the golden opportunity that is to be realized by printing these stories that have never been duplicated, you deprive many readers of their chance to read these stories that are no longer available.

Obviously, the most balanced policy that *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* can follow is to reprint *all* great fantasy, regardless of its original publication, whether in book or magazine.

I find that I miss the illustrative work of Frank R. Paul most poignantly. To those of us fans who were broken in to fantasy by Hugo Gernsback's old science-fiction magazines, and their respective quarterlies, there has always been, and shall always be, only one illustrator of fantasy—the incomparable Paul. His work is so superior, particularly in black-and-white illustrations, to that of any of his contemporaries, including Finlay, that there seems to me to be no ground for comparison. Paul has such a flair for exactitude of detail and such a mania for clarity that he towers above all the others.

As for the present art work, I imagine that it is adequate until the return of Paul.

Along with many other of your readers, I wish that *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* was published monthly, or at least bi-monthly. Surely this can be arranged. .?

I have often wondered exactly why I read pulp fantasy. It is not that I am seeking the grotesque, for the merely grotesque can be found in juvenile comic books. Nor is it my fondness for literature that makes me read fantasy, for even Merritt and Lovecraft at their best were not writing literature that can even be compared with the writing of, let us say, Henry Fielding and Leo Tolstoy, to pick a couple of names at random; they were merely writing darn good fantasy. Again, I do not read fantasy for educational purposes; indeed, quite the contrary, since most fantasy writers are not above misinforming their readers, particularly in the pseudo-science stories.

I suppose, then, that I read fantasy for escape, and for the purpose of providing a little roughage in the steady diet of my reading. At all events, I certainly enjoy reading fantasy, when the story is well told. Style of writing is perhaps more important than plot. Writers who are capable of combining the two elements are A. Merritt, Austin Hall, George Allan England, Francis Stevens, and John Taine. These are my favorites, and may indicate what sort of fiction I like to read in your magazine.

"The Day of the Brown Horde" is an excellent fantasy, and I will be very glad to re-read it. Although it must be all of a decade since I last read it, I can remember it quite well, so you can see that it was an outstanding story. Please do not reprint Gawain Edwards' "The Earth-Tube" as one reader suggests. Not only is the story a hash of hackneyed blood-and-thunder, but it is definitely dated in view of the present war with Japan. I have never read fantasy books to any great extent so I cannot supplement the suggestions submitted by most of your readers. Some years ago Hugo Gernsback promised to have Hans Dominik's futuristic novels about the Atlantean continent translated from the German, but this was never done. Perhaps they may be worth reprinting.

Stories I did not like were "Three Go Back," which was too preachy, "The Ark of Fire," which was juvenile, and Hodgson's sea stories which are simply poorly written.

The only story by H. P. Lovecraft that I have read is the "Colour Out of Space" which you reprinted a couple of years ago. I enjoyed it immensely, and if you can obtain more of his stories, they should be well worth reading.

Some years ago I read a novel called "Atlantida" by Benoit, a Frenchman. It concerned the adventures of two Foreign Legionnaires who inadvertently stumble upon a city, somewhere in the Sahara, which is a remnant of Atlantean civilization. It was rather good, and I do not believe that it has been suggested thus far.

I concur with the many readers who suggest that the title of the magazine be changed to *Fantasy Classics.*

A. H. L.

Editor's Note: F.F.M. began with the Sept.-Oct. issue, 1939, making the magazine five years old with this issue.

HER FIRST FAN LETTER

This is the first time I have written to the readers' page of any magazine, so please bear with me in my ignorance of how to go about it. My purpose is to kill two birds with one stone. First, I want to tell you how much I enjoy reading your magazine. It is, in my opinion, one of the best in the field. I have been reading F. F. M. for two years now and thoroughly absorb every story from start to finish. Though there is one thing I have yet to understand. Why do the readers continually ask for stories which they have already read elsewhere? Frankly, it seems rather silly to me. I say, "Give us more and better new stories." I have always enjoyed the stories you have printed, so why spoil your record with stories that have appeared in *Argosy* or A. S. or for that matter, any of the other mags? Well, I guess that covers things pretty well for the present, so we will move on to the proverbial "second bird."

I have noticed in your magazine, as well as in the other Science Fiction and Fantasy magazines, that there is one reader who invariably expresses himself in every issue. He is Chad Oliver, and I would like to ask him if he has past copies of magazines dated before January, 1942, and if so, how I may obtain what copies he has. That is, if he is agreeable.

Thanks to your swell readers' page, it is possible for me to catch up on the mags I missed before I started reading this type of literature. I will greatly appreciate anything Mr. Oliver may have. He can, of course, contact me directly or through your readers' department.

Have just finished the June issue. It was superb. I don't know which was the better story, but the presentation was almost too realistic to be just fantasy.

Congrats on your policy of printing what the readers like. Keep up the good work. We love it.

RUTH WIEGMAN.

43 HILLS PL.,
RIDGEFIELD PARK, N. J.

"GREATEST ADVENTURE" TOPS

I wish to get in touch with a Frederick I. Ordway whose letter you printed in June, 1944 F.F.M., without his address.

I had a hard time waiting for "Greatest Adventure" but it was sure worth it. It was tops! I hope you print more of Taine, especially "Purple Sapphire" and "Gold Tooth."

Also, I wish to add my two cents worth along with the others in hoping you put aside your policy, to print Merritt's works in any form. Most of all "Ship of Ishtar."

If you would only go monthly and print Merritt every other month, I think you would make a lot of fans happy. But I guess the paper shortage will not allow you to do this.

Well, here's hoping anyhow.

Waiting for your next issue,
ANTHONY RICCARDI.

5718 So. GRAMERCY PL.,
LOS ANGELES, 37, CALIF.

Editor's Note: The address of Mr. Ordway, which was unintentionally omitted from the last issue, is 2929 Ordway St., N. W., Washington D. C. (8).

FROM THE NAVY

When I entered the Navy I did not expect to be able to write to Fantasy editors but by some freak of chance I have been able to comment on every issue since then. Of course, in the future it may be different, but right now I'll take advantage of the situation.

I was especially pleased with your classical northwoods fantasy, "The Wendigo." The natural and supernatural with a deft artistic touch. For those who like action and suspense, or those who like artistic literature, the tale is just the thing.

I haven't yet read "The Greatest Adventure" but evidence indicates that it is a remarkable story. However, I think you are crowding too many of the same kind of stories together. Too many prehistoric feature stories get tiresome. However, your mention of Lord Dunsany holds me in suspense. I expect something really good. May I also suggest James Stephens?

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FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES

Keep those F.F.M.'s coming—they are nice for a Service man to get hold of.

Rosco E. Wright, S 2/c.

TRIBUTE TO A. MERRITT

The last time I wrote you, I spoke only of my shock and sorrow at Abraham Merritt's death. So this time, I'll give you my congratulation on a fine issue . . . the March F.F.M.

However, since my last letter, I have got hold of several of Merritt's yarns in the pages of back issues of F.F.M. "Dwellers in the Mirage," "Three Lines of Old French," "The Metal Monster," "Face in the Abyss," "The Snake Mother". . . they are wonderful. If I did not have them here, to read, I would not believe that any writer could turn out such beautifully written material.

From the first, ever since I have been reading fantasy, I have been hearing about the wonderful, splendid works of A. Merritt. And I'll confess, I didn't believe that any writer could be as good as everyone said.

Now I know better.

Merritt was everything good that any fan ever said about him, and better. Some of his tales are better than others, but I've yet to find one that isn't a classic of the highest degree. Reading these old issues has made me more sorrowful than ever, because I know that there won't ever be another Merritt. Yes, I know, they said that about H. Rider Haggard, and someone once called Merritt the "new Haggard," didn't he? But I rank Merritt *high, high* above even H.R.H.

Now, I change to F.F.M.

The cover is fine . . *much* better than the bad one on the December issue. True, it's *still* far below Finlay, but it is a good substitute. Oh, to have Virgil back, though!

"The Man Who Was Thursday" was a surprise, a welcome one. Frankly, I expected one of these silly, "fantasy" detective thrillers that you run across much too often. I should have known that G. K. Chesterton wouldn't be guilty of anything like that, from my detective reading.

This tale was fine . . . a well-written, beautiful story. It doesn't have the unearthly, delightful beauty of Merritt's tales, but the beauty is there nonetheless. A story that does credit to F.F.M., that belongs in the only really classic Fantasy mag . . . . and that is the highest compliment, I think, that can be given to a fantasy.

"The Ghost Pirates" also was good, although not as good as Chesterton's tale: A nice weird, it too was a F.F.M. type story.

The interior pics were neat, but naturally, not as good as Finlay. The one on page eight was the best.

And now, being a true "great ego," I'll give you a few suggestions. I honestly think that these are good ideas; so see what you think of them.

First, about the old Munsey mag stories left unprinted. I want to see "Ship of Ishtar," "The (complete) Moon Pool," and the others, but with quarterly issues, I think you ought

to wait until after the war, when you can go monthly, and use one issue for old mag stories, the next for a never-before-printed yarn, etc. Or perhaps you could give us *two* magazines, bringing back F.N. Then (both monthly) F.F.M. would publish the non-magged tales, two books or one book and several shorts to an issue, and F.N. would publish the new stories, and the magazine reprints. You should not publish the Merritt yarns yet. Wait until you can get Virgil Finlay pictures. The Masters of Fantasy, Finlay and Merritt, have been connected for so long in the pages of F.F.M. that I think you should have Finlay to do all of Merritt's work, just as he has up to now. And when the complete "Moon Pool" is issued, don't use the original pics. Get Finlay to do at least six or seven new ones, and a good cover.

About the name . . . it would seem strange, after five years, but I think that you should change the name to *Famous Fantasy Classics* as has been suggested. Then we will have to learn to say F.F.C. instead of F.F.M. I don't like either "Fantastic" or "Mysteries" too much. "Fantasy" and "Classics" are much better. And if you start (or re-start) putting out F.N., why not call it *"Fantasy Novels?"*

If trimmed edges add cost to the magazines, in money, appearance schedule, or quality, or quantity of contents, *no!!* They're all right, even desirable, but think how much more desirable the stories are!!

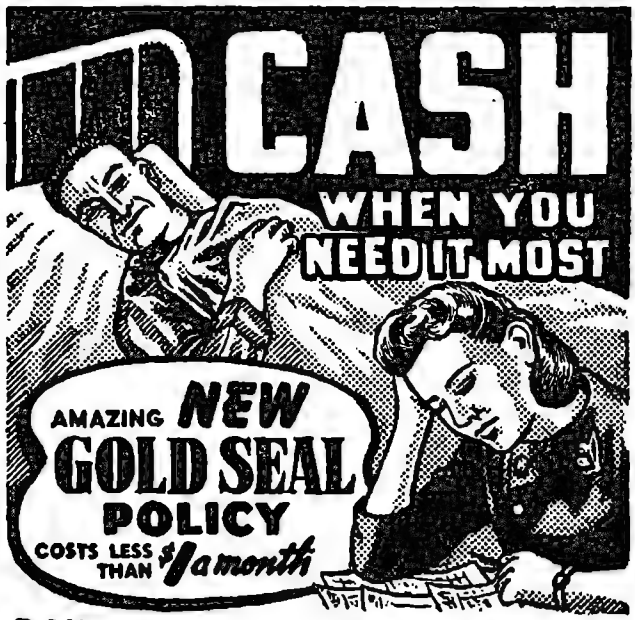
Stories . . . I have heard a lot about; "Gold Tooth," "Purple Sapphire," "Quayle's Invention" by John Taine; "Cosmos," and Lovecraft's "The Dream Quest Of Unknown Kadath." If you don't publish any others, try to give us Haggard's "She" and its sequel, "Ayesha."

How about devoting one whole issue to the remainder of "The King In Yellow"? Or no, put in also those stories which have already appeared in F.F.M., to keep it complete. If you can't do this (with two illustrations per story by Hannes Bok), be sure to keep on publishing parts of it until you have it all.

Some of Sax Rhomer's stories, as suggested, would be fine for a change. I suggest, first of all, "The Island Of Fu Manchu." This is the finest of the "Fu Manchu" fantasies. Also the most fantastic.

Yes, as Ben Indick says, F.F.M. is the only truly fantasy magazine left; all the others are science-fiction, except for one which uses weird-fantasy. I think that if John Taine, Clark Ashton Smith, and others of the old-style fantasy school would return with stories written in that spirit, it would be a shot in the arm to fantasy, a shot that would be heard 'round the world, if you'll pardon my mixing my phrases. And the return of F.N., using new stories of this type, would be equally potent.

When Charles McNutt says that Hodgson's "Derelict" in the Dec. issue reminds him of a Phil Fisher yarn in an early F.F.M., he means "Fungus Isle" in the October, '40 issue, doesn't he? I thought of that as soon as I read "Fungus Isle" (which back issue I got some time



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after last December). By the way, that same issue also contained Merritt's "Face In The Abyss," one of his best.

Please, more poetry. Poetry has been with F.F.M. from the beginning, and is darn good. Nanek's poem "Dwellers In The Mirage" is inserted in the pages of my copy of F.N. that featured "Dwellers in the Mirage." Here is some of the poetry that I thought extra good in F.F.M. and F.N. "Through The Time Glass" by Stanton A. Coblentz, in the August, '41 issue of F.F.M., "The Woman Of Ice," by Robert W. Lowndes, in the December, '40 issue, and "The Devil's Bodyguard" by Clyde Irvine in the same issue (this latter wasn't really a poem, for it was prose, and covered four and a half pages, but it was as beautiful poetry as any I ever read, so it's in), "The Face In The Abyss" by Bob Lowndes, October, '40, "Dwellers In The Mirage," by Nanek, September, '43, and "The Song of Nimir" by Bob Lowndes, in the November, '40 issue.

I would like to see a two-page poem by Nanek, treating "The Moon Pool" as she sang of "Dwellers In The Mirage."

Me, I'm a free-verse poet. Naturally. Ha.

I would like to get a copy of "Ark Of Fire" and "The Iron Star," as my copy of "Iron Star" is in bad condition. Never lend a prized magazine to a friend who isn't a fan himself. Would like to hear from guys who have back issues of *Super Science* and *Astonishing Stories.*

Yours in Fantasy,
TOM PACE.

EASTABOGA, ALABAMA.

"THE WENDIGO" POTENT

You mentioned in a recent editor's page that you were guided by your readers. If so, please permit me to ask for the "Willows," if it comes near to being as good as "The Wendigo." "The Wendigo" was everything that Lovecraft said. It was indeed potent. I am sure most of the readers would enjoy immensely another Blackwood tale.

Since you have printed two Taine novels, and both of them were very good, I would like to suggest some more Taine stories in the not too distant future. I have not read any of these, but have heard such favorable comment about them, that it looks as if they will make a hit. "The Purple Sapphire," "Queen of the Science," and "Green Fire," please.

Lawrence is taking Finlay and Paul's place better than any other artist, with the exception of Bok, and one or two others. The two page spread on pages eight and nine of "The Greatest Adventure" was amazingly accurate, weird, and down-right good.

This might be quite stale now, but I am another of those people who want *Classics of Fantasy* for the title of your magazine. This is more a compliment than anything else, asking for such a title, since they *are* classics!

In closing I have a short list of suggestions: Bi-monthly publication, trimmed edges, a Lord Dunsany, and if possible a Munsey once in a while? Some of these things I realize can not

be done until the end of the war but some *can* be done now. Thank you for hours of the best entertainment.

AUSTIN HAMEL.

2090 EAST TREMONT AVE.,
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LOOKING FORWARD TO TOOKER

I have been absent in Mexico for some time and, inevitably, out of touch with the much loved world of fantasy. I had hoped on my return to find a ceiling-reaching stack of F.F.M.'s—instead there was only a meagre pile. I have devoured them down to the current number, and it seems eternity must pass before the next issue will arrive.

This is my first letter to Popular's F.F.M. In totality it is inferior to Munsey's F.F.M., but promises to at least equal its predecessor by the time it has appeared in an equal number of issues. None of your lead novels appealed very strongly to me, and I had already bought and read the books containing the shorter pieces . . . "The Yellow Sign," "The Derelict," "The Wendigo," etc. Your use of these real classics of fantasy-horror will certainly add to the value of F.F.M as a collector's item. What greater praise could Popular and its magazine desire?

"The Greatest Adventure" strikes me as being your most absorbing lead novel. Several passages in it contain the strongest appeal. I look forward to Tooker's novel, as it is one I have long wanted to read, and so far I have not been able to find a copy of the book. Some time I hope you will present Machen's "Great God Pan," since apparently it is impossible to unearth a copy of it.

Lovecraft's "The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath," for which I notice several requests, appears to be one of the things he did that is too much influenced by Dunsany, and I don't think F.F.M. readers would like it. Besides, I understand that one of your competitors is going to print it. I suggest that you use the title story from Chambers' "The Maker of Moons," along with "Repairer of Reputations" and "In the Court of the Dragon" from "The King in Yellow." None of the other tales in "Maker of Moons" appear very fantastic. Then there are at least two fine tales in F. Marion Crawford's "Wandering Ghosts" that F.F.M. readers would like—"For the Blood is the Life" and "The Upper Berth." Ambrose Bierce has some splendid stories, three or four of which might fit into F.F.M. but Bierce's books can be easily ob-

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tained. For eight dollars I got a first edition "Can Such Things Be?" with a four line inscription in Bierce's hand. So your space should be reserved for the items that are really very hard to locate.

Merritt's death was a shock even if I had felt that the flow of fiction from his pen had come to an end anyway. If he did leave stories in a fair state of completeness I hope you will make every effort to obtain and present them. But I imagine most of the rumored items had not progressed beyond the "germ" stage. I saw a letter he wrote to one fan only a short while before his death, in which he said he seriously contemplated only *three* stories, and of those, he said, only the one using the legend of the Fox Women had had any real work done on it. About eleven chapters of it had been completed, his letter reported. The Chinese sorcery tale and the Mayan legend item apparently were things to be done "perhaps". Maybe somebody — say, Henry Kuttner — could do something with the Fox Women tale, provided of course the Merritt estate would allow it. C. L. Moore is certainly not the person to attempt it. Despite her excellent imagination and flair for beautiful descriptive writing, her stories, due to their paucity of incident and mediocre characterizations, are no more satisfying than beef-steak odors without the beef-steak. They arouse more hunger than they can even begin to feed. Still you cannot afford to waste her imagination and flair for description. If she and Kuttner really took the necessary time, in collaboration, they might actually produce some novels in the grand Merritt manner for you. Their *Argosy* collaboration-serial is not a bad story—unsatisfying is a better way to describe it—and I, for one, feel that they could have made it into a really powerful tale, if more time and effort had gone into its creation. ("Earth's Last Citadel.")

I hope you at least give them a chance to produce a novel.

And that's all for the time being—please hand the enclosed dollar to the circulation department to renew my subscription to F.F.M., which remains my number one favorite.

PTAREK.

THAT CHARMING MONSTER!

I received the Finlay Portfolio and, boy! they're swell! Thanks a lot.

After carefully reading the June F.F.M., I now eagerly await the next issue just one quarter of a year from now. Since F.F.M. is coming out so infrequently now, can't you have more pages, or something?

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THE READERS' VIEWPOINT

Of course, we are all looking forward to the post-post-war F.F.M.: a super magazine called *"The Classics of Fantasy"*; and in two sections (one section reprinting books, the other magazines) each containing one novel, two (or one) novelettes, and several short stories. Although such a magazine would undoubtedly cost double the present price, it would be well worth it. Such a magazine, however, is probably a dream: but its nice to dream about.

When are we going to have some more from the "King in Yellow"? Soon, I hope.

Stanley Skirvin's suggestions of Arthur Machen's "The Novel of the Black Seal" and "Novel of the White Powder" etc., sounds fascinating—the stories, I mean, not the suggestion itself.

I don't believe I need to make any comment on the June F.F.M. 'Twas superb! "The Greatest Adventure" was much better than I thought it would be—from the description in the March issue I didn't think much of it, *but* after *reading* it, well! *it was perfectly perfect.*

"The Wendigo" captured perfectly the fear that comes of being alone like that in a great forest.

One thing I should like to see done is to have *all* the advertising (except, perhaps, those pertaining to F.F.M. & Company itself) completely separate from the other part of the magazine.

Illustrations:

Those for "The Greatest Adventure" perfect. "The Wendigo" disappointing. They seemed to be a bit too, well, flashy. I didn't care for them.

Cover:

Quite interesting. My first thought was: "What a charming monster! It looks as though it is made out of molded hard rubber."

One thing, keep your titles on the cover like those of the June issue.

If, for some unknown reason you decide maybe to reprint a Merritt, won't you make it "The Ship of Ishtar" original version?

RICHARD STOCKTON.

1600 CAMINO SIERRA,
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TAINE ALWAYS WELCOME

The purpose of this letter is to find out if there is any possibility of your printing "The Ship of Ishtar" by A. Merritt. This is the only story by Merritt that I have not yet read.

Now, I would like to comment on the March issue. The best story far and away was "The Ghost Pirates." Chesterton's yarn didn't seem very much like fantasy to me, but I could be wrong.

Anything by Taine is welcome. Taine has, in my opinion, one of the best imaginations of any of the authors and his stories are always good.

The cover for the March issue was pretty good but Lawrence is still no match for Finlay.

Please accept my best wishes for the continued success of what is undoubtedly the best fantasy mag on the stands today.

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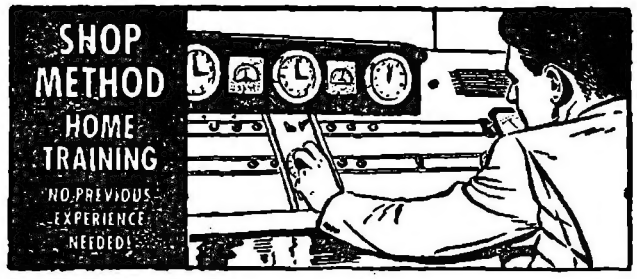

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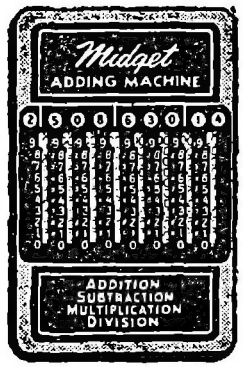

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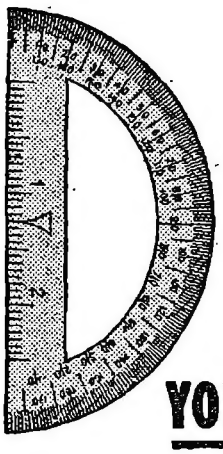

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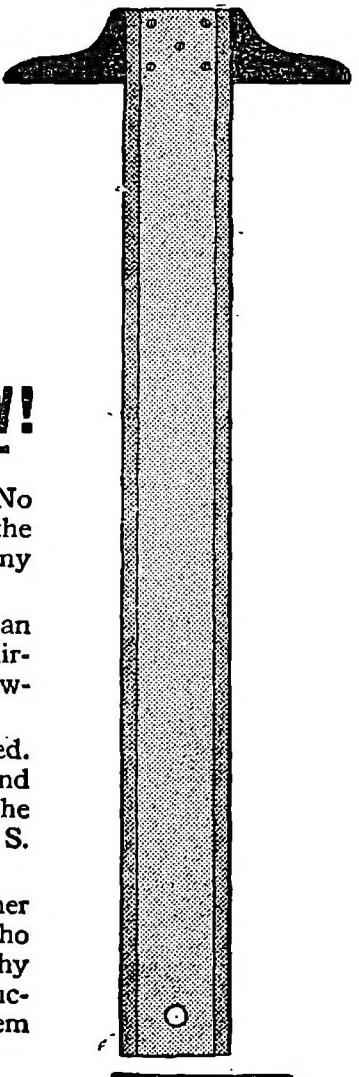

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